



School of Economics  
and Commercial Law  
GÖTEBORG UNIVERSITY

Integrerad civilekonomutbildning  
Bachelor Thesis, ICU2005:36

# One of the Finest Schools in the Country?

The Expectations and Views on the Quality of the Education Expressed by the  
Students Attending the School of Economics and Commercial Law in  
Gothenburg, Sweden.

Bachelor Thesis

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Business Economics/Management and Organization  
Spring semester 2005

## **Abstract**

The purpose of our study is to examine if the education given at the School of Economics and Commercial Law at Gothenburg University meets the students' expectations. Furthermore, we want examine the students' view of the education quality and find out what their perception of quality is. A 2002 evaluation, made by the National Agency for Higher Education in Sweden concerning education within the field of business economics given at Swedish universities, serves as a background for our study.

In order to attain our purpose we chose to do in-depth interviews with students who currently study business economics at C-level. This resulted in twelve interviews divided into four groups of three, one group for each field of concentration; accounting, finance, marketing and management and organization. We also deliberately chose students of different ages and backgrounds and mixed genders.

We came to the conclusion that the students' expectations do play a pivotal role in how they perceive the quality of the education. The school's good reputation and name cause many students to have very high expectations. The students' high expectations lead to high demands that the school is obliged to fulfill in order for the quality to be perceived well. If the school cannot meet the students' expectations, their view of the education quality is affected negatively. Most of the respondents seem to be satisfied with the education but everyone had suggestions on how to improve it, which helped identify certain deficiencies. For the students, quality is primarily a question of competent teachers with regard to pedagogics.

## **Preface**

We want to begin by thanking everyone who made it possible to carry out this study. Many people have been supportive during the writing process and we would like to express our gratitude towards our loved ones who have inspired us during the writing process. We would also like to especially thank Martin Gustafsson and Csongor David, who in their capacities as proofreaders has given us feedback on the material; a sincere thanks for your time and effort.

Great thanks to all of the respondents who were kind enough to agree to participate in the interviews. This study would not have been possible without your unique contributions.

And finally thank you, Carina Löfström, for always taking your time to guide us in the writing process. You brought calm to a stressed situation.

Thank you all!

June 2005-06-08, Gothenburg, Sweden

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to the Study

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*This was developed to contribute to a better understanding of the students' expectations and views about their business studies at the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg. An introduction to the research will follow below. In the following chapter we will give you the background of the topic in the paper, the purpose for us choosing it and the research process.*

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It is said that time is money. This seems to be correct considering the fact that much of what happens in our world is in some way or another related to money. Being a student takes a great part of one's time and is therefore interesting to study what we do with our time. A university degree takes a long time to obtain; time that for many is filled with continuous anguish. Many relate this period to living conditions barely above subsistence level with constant exam anguish. A more positive retrospection is the one with glory days filled with parties and an exam once in a while. However one looks at it, this period in life is vital and may be of decisive importance for one's future. The university studies and obtaining a degree most often contributes to special career opportunities as well as personal development.

Apart from the time invested into obtaining a university degree, there are costs related to university studies that one has to consider. In Sweden, the universities fees are subsidized by the government, meaning students do not have to pay fees but there are many other costs worth mentioning in connection with attending a university; living costs, the opportunity costs of studying, course literature and so forth. Most students take student loans as a means of livelihood. The maximum number of weeks a university student can obtain a student loan is 240 weeks at a maximum amount of 1,135 Swedish kronor a week. When a student finishes his or her studies, the borrowed amount has to be repaid immediately from that day until retirement; a certain amount each month or quarter depending on the future income. Today's interest on a student loan is 2.9 percent ([www.csn.se](http://www.csn.se)). It is possible to receive subsidies from the government or work extra on the side to boost the budget. Thus, it is a great personal investment in both time and capital to obtain a university degree. Companies that invest in hard capital such as a machine have the right to demand quality from the supplier. The machine should reach certain standards concerning quality and reliability. Similarly, with regard to the investment students make in their education, it is not unreasonable that they also demand a certain standard and level of quality for their education. However, terms such as *standard* and *quality* may seem strange in this context. Just like a company, students also have expectations for their educations. For this reason we are interested in studying whether the education given at the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg attains an adequate level of quality and whether it meets the students' expectations. We want to study this based on the students' opinions about the education provided. We believe that their opinions are valuable since they are the ones investing time and capital in the education. In conclusion, the students give their time and money to obtain a university degree, but are they getting value for the money?

One of the reasons that motivated us to examine whether the business education given at the School of Economics and Commercial Law reaches a satisfying level of quality and whether it meets the students' expectations is the concern among many students about finding employment and the gloomy labor market that awaits them after their studies. For a newly graduated business student it is especially important to show a genuine and high-quality business economics degree in order to compete for employment. Another reason is the authority that supplies student loans: CSN (*Centrala Studiestödsnämnden*). As mentioned earlier, most students take loans to be able to study and they expect value for their money. Also, one has to take into consideration that a four to five year long university education usually results in large amounts borrowed. And since CSN has tightened the conditions for borrowing money over the past years, the amortizations can become quite large. Hence, it is good to have a well-paying job and these jobs are usually available to those who have generally recognized educations.

The question is, then who will our study interest? A group that we believe our study should concern is naturally the students. Another party concerned is the school itself. With this study they should be able to receive feedback on their quality work. The study is also of interest to employers who very often have close connections with the different educational institutions. The school itself asserts that the education is of high quality, but it should also be of interest to look at the students' opinions on the matter. This way it is possible to verify whether the standards stipulated by the school are confirmed by the students' opinions. A university degree from a prominent school can be worth a lot; to the student and the employer, but also to the university whose reputation is further promoted by former students.

## **1.1 Background**

Business and economic studies are one of the most popular topics at universities in Sweden today. It is the second largest choice of subject after mathematics in terms of registered students at the undergraduate level. Worth mentioning in this context is that mathematics is a subject principally studied to support the general understanding of other topics and study programs. Thus, business and economic studies can be considered the primary choice of subject at the various universities in Sweden. As a consequence of the fast expansion of the number of students in combination with relatively few teachers to meet this increasing demand, the quality of the education has sometimes been questioned. Moreover, many students choose to move to the older universities by the end of their studies because the degrees from these universities are more highly regarded. Two of these universities are the business schools in Stockholm and Gothenburg. The difference between these two and other universities around the country is that the institutions at these schools are able to meet the demand for business studies. These evaluations and the above mentioned facts were presented in a report from the National Agency for Higher Education in 2002. The National Agency for Higher Education examined the chosen universities' accreditation and evaluate the quality of the education given at the universities in the field of business and economics.

The report establishes business economics to be a generally popular subject both as major and minor subjects. The number of registered business economics students has dramatically increased over the past twenty years. This is thought to be a consequence of the general opinion that the education gives great career opportunities. There are concerns of the lack of balance between the teacher resources and the number of students at the A and B study levels. Further, there are concerns regarding the work burden forced upon thesis supervisors at the bachelor's and master's level.

The results are that very few students are able to write individual thesis papers. With this in mind, questions can be raised on how the examiners examine individual papers in accordance to the University Regulation?

Worth mentioning is that the number of actual business economics degrees are relatively low in comparison to the total number of university credits obtained by business economics students. The earlier mentioned increase in demand for the education has also lead to a development of new fields within the subject which is positive since it widens the subject area. At the same time the great development of new fields within business can become a problem considering that the demand for bachelor's and master's level will also increase.

Each educational institution has the responsibility for the quality of their education and the operations should be adjusted so that a high quality can be obtained, according to the report from the National Agency for Higher Education (2002). The available resources should be used in a way to assure a high level of quality. The quality work should furthermore be a common matter to the personnel and the students. A number of measures are mentioned as guarantees of quality in the report from the National Agency for Higher Education (2002). The report speaks about the foundation of different discussion forums on matters such as long-term strategies, the planning of education and subject didactics. These forums should be open for everybody, both professors and students. The universities should follow-up on graduated students' experiences and opinions for the development of courses and programs. There are also measures in the University Regulation such as students' rights to be represented in decision-making bodies and in preparatory bodies. Other measures mentioned are systematic course evaluations including the establishment and follow-up on course evaluations. When it came to the quality guarantees at the universities, the National Agency for Higher Education found a few inadequacies. None of the departments that were examined carried through all the measures the National Agency for Higher Education presented. Some of the departments did not even fulfill the compulsory obligations. The evaluation showed that students in general are represented in decision-making bodies but not in the important preparatory bodies. Moreover, very few departments had functioning course evaluation systems. The students are often responsible for the course evaluations. The evaluations are usually not adequate in summarizing the students' reflections. The conclusion drawn by the National Agency for Higher Education is that many of the evaluated departments should improve their work in regards to quality. We believe the lack of representation of students in the evaluation bodies of the education's quality is a problem for genuine quality estimation. Therefore we aim to examine the students' views on the quality of the education.

On November 25, 2004, the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg was accredited by the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS). EQUIS is run by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), an international system for quality guarantees of higher education given within the field of business, economics and management ([www.efmd.org](http://www.efmd.org)). The objective of EFMD is to increase the standardization in the field of business and economics worldwide. According to the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg, the EQUIS-accreditation fulfills two primary goals; the school obtains an international quality guarantee and furthermore the school receives all the requirements to continuously and systematically carry on with their work towards quality. A written self evaluation is an important part of the accreditation but the evaluation also consists of a visit to the school from an international group of academics and representatives in the industry. Before the school obtained the EQUIS-accreditation a number of representative students were interviewed regarding the school environment.

They were asked questions from a report made by other students, which was a part of the preparatory work before obtaining the accreditation. The interviewed students were chosen by the students' union so we are therefore interested in finding other students' views and opinions concerning the education.

## **1.2 Earlier Studies**

*Below we will illustrate the results of earlier studies made in within the same field of research; educations, students and expectations. There are three studies: the report from the National Agency for Higher Education, the STUG-project and Will You Be Profitable Little Friend? We will return to these earlier studies later in the last chapter to compare them with our results.*

### **The Report from the National Agency for Higher Education**

According to the report from the National Agency for Higher Education, the business department at the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg is one the largest and leading institutions teaching business and economics in Sweden. The well-established institution is aiming to gain an international reputation that is attractive to ambitious students. It is therefore considered a privilege to attend the school.

According to the report, the School of Economics and Commercial Law has commendable premises and good access to library resources and seats. The students seem to be less satisfied with the access to group rooms and computers and to the working environment in one of the computer halls.

The teacher capacity is considered too low to keep a desired level of the education. The theoretical connection in each field is regarded as good at the bachelor's and master's level. However, lectures held by professors were considered to be too few in the basic courses; A-level and B-level. The report also says that the number of students attending classes is larger than desired in order to keep a high-quality education. This becomes apparent when the class is solving exercises together. The reason for keeping such large classes is the scarce resources. In a self-evaluation performed by the National Agency for Higher Education the teachers evaluated themselves; they work approximately 10% above their working hours without pay.

Student influence is generally considered to be a good thing but the students' engagement was found to be low at the school. When it comes to the course evaluation system the evaluators state that it does not function because of two reasons; the feedback of the result to the students is poor and many students do not carry out the course evaluations. The students' low engagement is believed to be the primary reason that the quality work is not functioning.

### **The STUG-Project**

The STUG-project, which is an abbreviation for STUdent at the University of Gothenburg, started in 2000. The aim of the project is to improve the foundation for the planning and follow-up of the university's education and to enhance the students' influence. The STUG-project is coordinated by Gudrun Balke who is a docent in pedagogics and responsible for the course evaluation unit at the planning unit in the University of Gothenburg. The School of Economics and Commercial Law is a part of the University of Gothenburg.



In the autumn of 2003, research was conducted as a part of the STUG-project. The research was based on record data and data from a survey that was performed. The purpose of this research was to find out what students were taking separate business courses outside the study programs of their education. According to the study, the four most common reasons for studying are;

- They want to experimenting with studying
- They want to get educated
- They want to obtain a degree
- They want to change careers

The research showed that students at the School of Economics and Commercial Law are more interested in obtaining a degree than students at other facilities. Moreover, the students' opinions about the teachers were worse at the School of Economics and Commercial Law than at other facilities.

When it comes to the view of the teachers' expertise within their fields, 55.5% of the students belonging to the business department thought it was good. The corresponding number for the entire University of Gothenburg was 72%. On the question whether teachers were considered to be interested in teaching only 31% of the students at the School of Economics and Commercial Law confirmed that they believed that teachers were interested in their jobs. This number was 50.7% at the rest of the University of Gothenburg. The teachers in the business department at the school received the worse grade in comparison to the rest of the University of Gothenburg. With regard to their ability to communicate knowledge comprehensively, the results were 21% versus 36.1%.

The expectations on the education were, however, the same regardless of whether the respondent was a student at the business department or at another facility. Approximately 90% of the students considered it important that the teachers had the expertise needed. They also considered it important that the teachers were interested in teaching and their pedagogic abilities. Furthermore, the survey showed that students at the School of Economics and Commercial Law study mainly to get employment or obtain a degree.

### ***Will You Be Profitable Little Friend? (Blir du lönsam lille vän?)***

During the fall semester of 2004, two students at the School of Economics and Commercial Law, Jonas Bengtsson and Oskar Knubbe, wrote a paper about the employers' views on the business and economics education and its different fields of concentration. The study began with a pilot study at school's labor market days called GADDEN, and it was followed with three in-dept interviews at three different companies.

In their study they came to the conclusion that the nature of the business and economics education and the grades are only significant in the preliminary phases of the recruiting process. Other factors will decide whether they become employed or not further on in the recruiting process. However, if one receives employment the education does become important again because of the employer's demand on the employees. The conclusion the authors came to was that the significance of the formal education goes from significant to less significant to then significant again.

The authors of the study mention that there is a tendency among recruiters to give employment to those who resemble themselves. They also show that companies in general tend to perceive business and economics students as a homogenous mass and consequently the employers probably do not take advantage of the specialist knowledge the students have from their different fields of concentration. Since the recruiters and employers neglect to take into account the students' deepened knowledge, there is a chance that they do not consider it in the recruiting process.

### **1.3 Problem Discussion**

Apparently the work towards quality has its shortcomings, but what does the National Agency for Higher Education define as quality? A number of measures of quality have been selected in cooperation with the evaluated universities. The measures of quality have been defined with regard to the regulations stipulated for universities in Sweden. The National Agency for Higher Education estimated the quality of the educations from an overall perspective with regard to the following; preconditions, accomplishment and result. Some of the quality aspects for the education's preconditions include; the teachers' competence and their opportunities for further development, the contents and organization of the education, accessibility to library and other sources of information, the premises, the equipment and so forth. Also, the work situation for the students, the teachers and the doctoral candidates is important in order to guarantee good quality. Likewise the curriculum and the forms of examination play an important role in evaluating the quality of an education. The premises where the studies are pursued should be characterized by a creative environment. The quality aspects that have been examined by the evaluation group are; work towards quality and evaluation, follow-up and accomplishments. However if students are not represented in the decision-making bodies as the National agency for Higher Education proclaims, there is also a risk that students will be overlooked in other important situations. The quality aspect of the education is without doubt an important question and no party concerned should be disregarded, much less students. We therefore want to examine the students' opinions on the school's quality and the given education more profoundly.

### **1.4 Purpose**

In light of the evaluation made by the National Agency for Higher Education in Sweden concerning education in the field of business and economics given at Swedish universities and business schools, we aim to examine if the education given at the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg corresponds to the students' expectations. Further, we want to examine the students' views about the quality of the education and what they define as quality.

### **1.5 Delimitation**

To be able to answer to the purpose of this study, we will primarily interview students. Their opinions will therefore serve as the source to our study, meaning we will only deal with expectations and quality from the students' perspectives. We also mean to take into consideration the same quality aspects as the National Agency for Higher Education in Sweden, but illustrate them from the students' angle of approach and in this way find out if the education at the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg meets the students' expectations of the education. We will not evaluate the quality from any other perspective than the students'. We have chosen to perform twelve interviews with students who currently study business economics at C-level at the School of Economics and Commercial Law. Henceforth when we use the term *students* we refer to the respondents. We will, however, not make any general statements about the business economics education since we consider these twelve respondents too few in numbers.

## Chapter 2

### How We Proceeded with the Study

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*In this chapter we describe the research process for this paper. We begin by describing the chosen research method and then proceed by discussing the choice of theory. We continue by explaining the procedure when choosing our respondents, how we made the interview outline and carried out the actual interviews. This results in an illustration of our interpretation and analysis of the research. We also discuss the strength and weaknesses of our research.*

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#### 2.1 Research Methodology

We are interested in finding out if the business and economics education provided at the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg meets the students' expectations with regard to the quality aspects presented in the evaluation report from the National Agency for Higher Education in 2002. The chosen procedure to find out to what degree the students are satisfied was to ask the students if the education meets their expectations. We also aim to find out whether students perceive the quality aspects similarly to the National Agency for Higher Education. Considering that we are students, the subject is highly relevant in our present lives. This implies a prior knowledge and subjectivity. Consequently, the interpretation of the empirical data will also be affected by our prior knowledge. The topic is a burning issue for us right now and on the basis of what is mentioned above we have chosen the hermeneutical scientific approach.

Sometimes it is easier to describe something by illustrating its opposite. The opposite of hermeneutics can be illustrated in positivism (Jacobsen 2002). Positivism explains and describes while hermeneutical research aims to study, interpret and understand the basis of the human existence and the world in order to create an overall picture. According to hermeneutical scientific methodology, the human being finds knowledge through lingual communication. Via lingual communication a human being makes interpretations of what is said and creates different kinds of understandings. A central term within hermeneutics is the biasness, which influences the way we interpret the object being studied. Biasness includes aspects such as experiences and other values that make us subjective in our interpretation of the empirical data. Hermeneutics is a scientific approach that prefers to use qualitative research methods and attempts to analyze and create a comprehensive overall picture of the subject (Patel & Davidson, 2003). Due to our biasness we believe that in-depth interviews are the most suitable research approach for the subject. This way we will be able to discuss the issues with the interviewees based on our own experiences.

#### 2.2 Choice of Method

There are two main research methods when choosing which method to use in a study. Holme & Solvang (1991) present the quantitative and qualitative research methods. The methods refer to two different empirical data gathering methodologies. When the aim of a study is to describe something statistically, the quantitative method is preferable. It is usually done with surveys where the respondents are given different alternatives to answer. With the quantitative method it is easier to measure a specific object and give correct answers to the distinguished material being studied than with the qualitative method. The qualitative method is preferable if the aim of the study is to gain an understanding of the object studied.

The gathering of information is similar to the learning process, which can be compared to the qualitative research method. As the study progresses the understanding of the studied object is accumulated. Qualitative data is usually text one way or the other; transcribed interviews, observations, written stories etc. A complete understanding of the subject is obtained through the collected data. To get a complete understanding of a subject, one needs to understand the different parts and vice versa. This is called the hermeneutic circle.

We chose to use the qualitative research method for our investigation. We hope that this methodology will lead us to a better understanding of the respondents' perceptions and opinions on the subject and whether the education offered at the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg meets the students' expectations. The research will be conducted through personal meetings with students and in-depth interviews.

### **2.3 Choice of Theory**

We chose to use the qualitative method because it gives us the chance to discuss the subjects; quality and motivation. This method should give us a better understanding of the students' thoughts and attitudes towards our field of research; studies, quality, expectations and school. We have therefore searched for literature that deals with quality and motivation from different perspectives. The choice of books and authors that deals with the subject of quality came from *Service Management and Marketing* by Grönroos (1990), *Quality from Customer Needs to Customer Satisfaction* by Bergman and Klefsjö (2003), and *Delivering Quality Service* by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990). They illustrate the quality aspect of services both from the receiving side and the transmitting side. Grönroos' theory also shows that the customer's expectations are important to the total quality experienced. All of the authors have also illustrated that the experienced quality is determined by the so-called quality determinants, and we may profit from these in our analysis when interpreting the respondents' answers.

The choice of authors and books that deal with the subject of motivation revealed the following; *Motivation and Personality* by Maslow (1954) and *Work Redesign* by Hackman & Oldman (1980). Together they give a picture of motivation and illustrate the subject from different perspectives; motives founded on needs and the effect of work routines on motivation. We consider it very important to understand what motivates the students in their work situation and under what conditions they work and how it affects them. This is the reason why we chose theories that deal with the subject of motivation.

### **2.4 Procedure when Choosing Respondents**

We deliberately chose students as the concerned party for our empirical part of the study. An alternative could have been to interview graduated students. We chose current students because we are looking for up-to-date information. Many things have changed over the past few years and a graduated student that may have attended the school a few years ago may not have an up-to-date picture of the education. There were not finding interviewees for our study. We have therefore been able to direct and chose the selection of interviews. To prevent a too narrow and biased point of view on our research we chose to maintain an acceptable number of interviews.

We also attempted to spread the interviews between the four different fields of concentration on the bachelor's level; management and organization, accounting, finance and marketing.

We furthermore attempted to include students from the Bachelor Program in Business and Economics and students taking separate courses outside the study-program. This resulted in twelve interviews divided into four groups of three; one group for each field management, accounting, finance and marketing. We also deliberately chose students of different ages and backgrounds and mixed genders.

After completing all the interviews we felt that the number of interviews were sufficient to contribute with enough material for our analysis. The interviews were all succesful in giving an elaborated picture of the subject. The interviewing process went smoothly and the interviewees shared many opinions and attitudes on the subject. This simplified the consequent analysis of the empirical data since there was such consistency in the interviewees' answers.

## ***2.5 Interviews and Interview Guide***

Two topics guided the construction of the questionnaire; the first topic was expectations and the future, and quality was the second. On the basis of these topics we made milestones with principal questions from which we formulated sub-questions. We created a mix of questions from what we thought to be relevant to our research. The mix included personal experiences in our capacities as students and the quality aspects set by the National Agency for Higher Education. We wanted to find out if the education at the School of Economic and Commercial Law meet the students' expectations. To get an answer to our question we first needed to know what expectations they had before attending the school. Then we sought to find out if they experienced that the school had lived up to their expectations. Furthermore, we found it was relevant for the topic whether the students shared the quality criterions with the National Agency for Higher Education. If they were not shared, what were their quality criterions, in other words how do the respondents define quality? On this matter we asked questions concerning the quality aspects that the National Agency for Higher Education referred to regarding the phases in the educational program; preconditions, accomplishment and result. Some of the questions were more direct than others. On the other hand, the questions were always open enough for the interviewees to be able to give their own opinions. We chose to go about the process this way in order to get a good picture of the respondents' views on the quality of the education and what they define as quality.

As mentioned earlier, we carried out twelve interviews. Each interview took approximately 30-60 minutes and they were all recorded digitally. We attempted to transcribe the interviews as fast as possible to the extent we had time. The remaining interviews were transcribed at a later occasion with the help of the voice recordings from the computer. We profited from the information we thought to be relevant for our study and documented each person. Quotations were chosen, observations, opinions and constructive criticism was noted.

## ***2.6 Interpretation and Analysis***

To be able to later profit from the interviews, we transcribed them with great care. They were transcribed one by one and later read one by one which gave us time to reflect on them. We believe that it is important to keep the work with the interviews separate for minimizing the biasness. We were then able to better distinguish the interviews apart. The points that were alike between the students were later collected to find common tendencies. Likewise, we were interested in the opinions they did not share. The transcriptions made it easy to go back into the collected material to make conclusions and see the different perspectives the students had. We discussed the tendencies we could see and what conclusions could be drawn from them.

Although there was some spontaneous reactions or observations, all of them connected to the theories we had chosen. We more closely defined the framework of our research field as we got further through the interviewing process.

When we conducted the analysis we started from the interview guide and interpreted the answers question by question. We chose to do so to simplify the identification of potential patterns. With the help of the leading features in our research the framework of the research became clearer and made the step to analysis possible.

## ***2.7 The Validity and the Reliability of the Research***

The purpose of validity is to standardize research. Without standardization one cannot compare and evaluate qualitative research. To maintain a high standardization level research honesty is required. In ensuring honesty one is required to reveal how relevant the research is in the form of validity. Validity can be classified into two groups: inside validity and outside validity. According to Merriam (1994), inside validity describes how applicable the results are to reality. Outside validity, on the other hand, is a measurement of how relevant the results are to the problem and in what way they can be used to describe other situations. We believe that the inside validity in our research can be found in the fact that we have quite a wide spread on the types of interviewees with regard to their current studies. We attempted to have a diversified respondent base to be able to capture the general opinion between the students. The spread between the ages, genders, study programs and backgrounds among the interviewed was one of the objectives. The outside validity is achieved by attempting to use the quality parameters that the National Agency for Higher Education is using. Hence, if we use these quality aspects, the research should not deviate too much in its nature from earlier ones. Reliability can be described as the repeatability of the research according to Holme and Solvang (1991). A high reliability means that different and independent measuring of the same phenomenon gives approximately the same result each time. That means that our study should not deviate too much from earlier studies within the same field; the report from the National Agency for Higher Education (2002), Will You Be Profitable Little Friend (2004) and the STUG-report (2005).

## ***2.8 Research Critique***

During the interviewing process we came to the conclusion that the perception of quality is very individual. It is very difficult to make any generalizations on the basis of our interviews about the students' general definition of quality and what their views of quality are. We can nevertheless comment on our twelve respondents' answers and state that we were able to see clear patterns in the empirical data. Many of the answers were similar, which makes it easier to make generalizations in the conclusions. We have, however, chosen not to do so and instead present the empirical data with comments and allow the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

We are also students at the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg, which may increase the biasness of the research. Hence, our subjectivity may influence our analysis. We have, however, used many of the aspects found in the report from the National Agency of Higher Education, which we believe should reduce the biasness of our analysis. Yet we stress our advantage in doing this research, considering that we are students ourselves at the school. It gives us unique insight into the subject and has made the interviews easier to perform considering that we were able to lead the interviews based on our experiences.

## Chapter 3

### Theoretical Framework

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*Below we outline the theories we intend to use in our analysis. We aim this way to reach the settled goals of the research. We start by thoroughly describing the term “quality” with the help of Grönroos’ models and view of quality of service-oriented corporations. Then we continue by describing different motivation theories to get a better understanding for the subject of motivation. The intention is to profit from the motivation theories later when analyzing the answers from our respondents.*

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#### **3.1 Quality**

The term “quality” comes from the Latin *qua litas* and means *from what*. It is important to point out that quality is something subjective and can be viewed from different individuals’ perspectives. In an organization there are many perceptions of quality; from the customer’s, the supplier’s, the co-worker’s, the investor’s, etc. (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2003). Since there are many perceptions of quality it is not possible to look at quality as something definite.

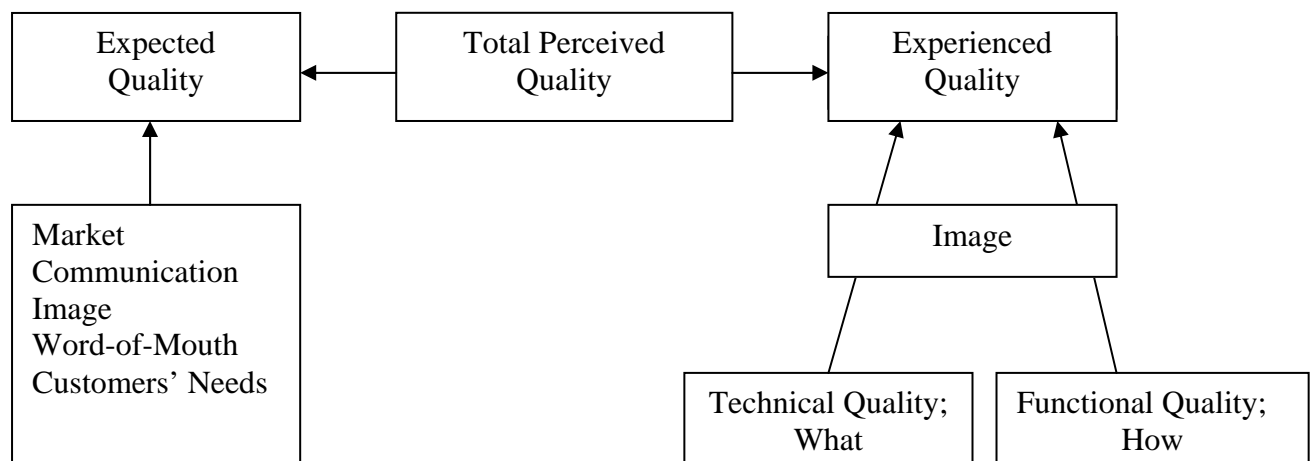
#### **Service Quality**

During the past years many quality models have been developed both for manufacturing industries and service oriented industries. The operation run by the School of Economics and Commercial Law can be regarded as a service oriented operation from the student’s point of view. What characterizes service-oriented companies is that they offer a product that is more abstract. It is not an object that one can touch; rather activities or a series of activities. Moreover, the service is often consumed and produced simultaneously and the customer is usually a part of the production process (Grönroos, 1990). This can be compared to the situation of our research objects; students taking classes to obtain a business economics degree.

#### **Technical and Functional Quality**

Grönroos talks about two dimensions of quality; a technical and a functional dimension. When referring to technical quality he means *what* the customer gets while with functional quality he refers to *how* the customer receives the service. Technical quality focuses on the quality of the service while the functional quality deals with the quality of the service supply. Together both dimensions result in the customer’s total quality experience. Grönroos further identifies an additional factor that affects the customer’s total quality experience; the expected quality. The expected quality is a result of the organization’s market communication, image and word-of-mouth. This factor filtrates bad and good experiences and diminishes their potential effects.





**Figure 3.1 The Total Perceived Quality (Grönroos, 1990)**

### ***Experienced Quality***

Earlier research has been conducted to find out what the customer perceives as quality in a service-oriented corporation (Berry et al., 1990; Bergman & Klefsjö, 2003; Grönroos, 1990). The criteria can be traced back to either the technical or functional quality. A service can have different quality dimensions and quality determinants and they differ depending on authors. In the following we will list a few of the quality determinants that we found among the above mentioned authors:

*Tangibility*; refers to the physical environment of the service-oriented corporation such as premises, machines and clothes.

*Reliability and credibility*; the customer knows that a supplier's main focus is to primarily keep the customer's best interest in regard, perform as good as possible, keep a certain level of effectiveness and keep his word.

*Professionalism and expert knowledge*; the customer has confidence in the supplier's and his co-workers' expertise and capacity to handle their problems in a satisfying way. It is also important that the customer has confidence in the supplier's production system and physical resources. The supplier must have the capability, competence and knowledge needed to deliver the offered services.

*Security*; the customer wants to feel a physical, financial and confidential security in the relationship with the supplier of the service.

*Attitudes and appearance*; the customer feels that the supplier's co-workers care about them and are genuinely interested in solving their problem in a good way. It is central that the supplier and his personnel are kind and considerate towards the customer.

*Communication and customer knowledge*; the service supplier should communicate in a language and way that the customer understands. It is also important that the service supplier listens to the customer and makes an effort to get to know the customer and his or hers needs.

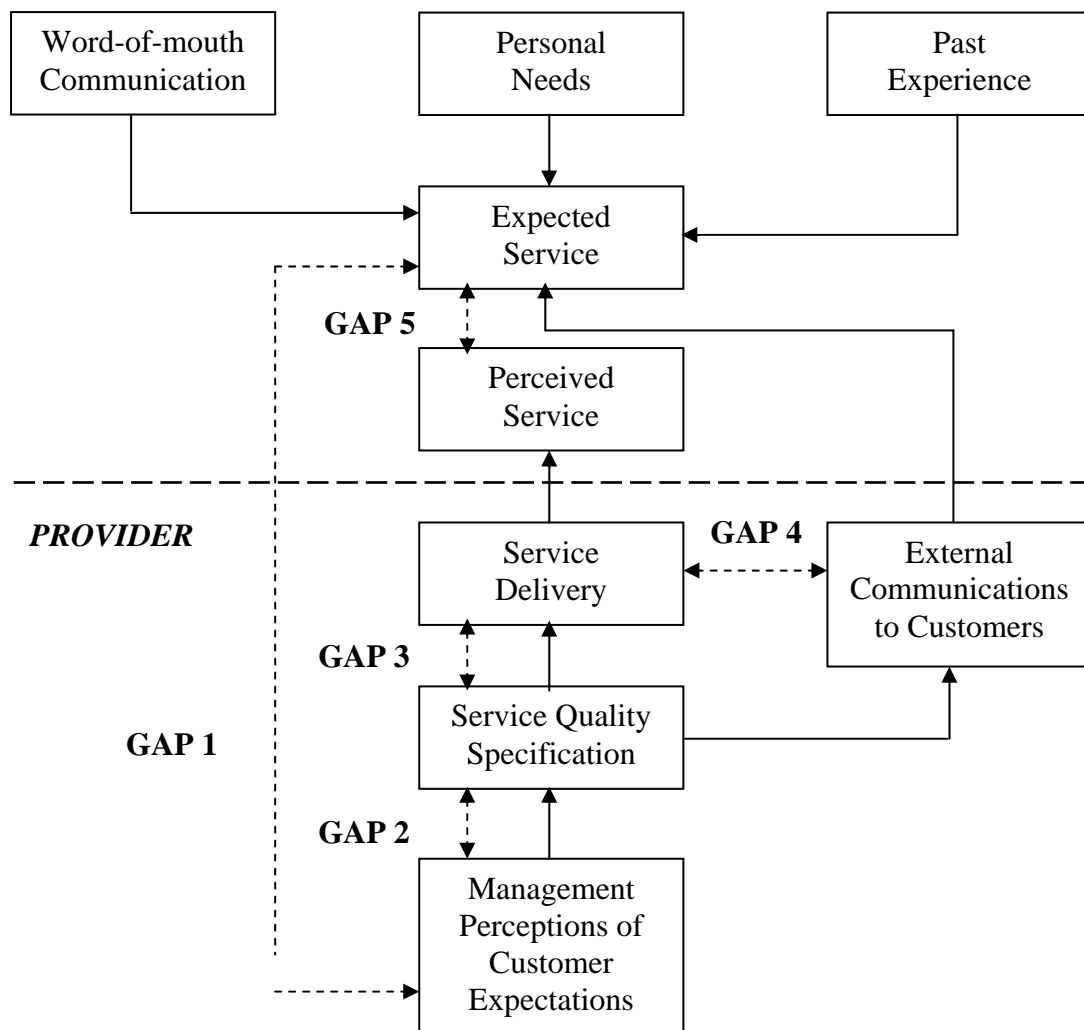
*Access and flexibility*; the customer feels that the service supplier is accessible with regard to geographical position, opening hours, co-workers, production systems and so forth. It is also important that the customer feels that the supplier is willing to adapt to the customer's needs and wishes. The supplier should also be willing to dedicate time to the customer.

For the service or services to reach a satisfying level of quality the organization must perform an acceptable number and level of the quality determinants. The experienced quality is later consciously or unconsciously compared to the expected quality.

### **Conceptual Model of Service Quality; the GAP-Model**

Berry et al. (1990) made a recognized study of service companies that resulted in the Conceptual Model of Service Quality, which is more known as the GAP-model. The model shows how service quality arises and how different gaps in a service's production, distribution and consumption process affect the customer's judgment of the quality of the delivered service.

#### **CUSTOMER**



**Figure 3.2 Conceptual Model of Service Quality; the GAP-Model (Berry et al., 1990)**

According to the model there are five gaps that should match each other for the customer to receive a good quality experience of the service. Consequently there are five presumptive scenarios that could cause a not satisfying quality level.

*GAP 1:* There may be differences between the customer's expectations and what the management perceives as the customer's expectations. The supplier might not know what high quality means to the customer.

*GAP 2:* A deviation may occur between the companies' service quality specifications and the management's perception of the customer's expectations. There may be internal restrictions about how the service is to be performed that hinder the personnel to meet the demands from the customer.

*GAP 3:* A difference between the service delivery quality and the quality specifications sometime arise. It also depends on the customer's perception since services are often based on personal contact between the supplier and customer.

*GAP 4:* There is a risk the service quality does not keep what is promised in the companies' marketing and other similar activities.

*GAP 5:* Shows the difference between expected and experienced service quality.

### **3.2 Motivation**

In the context of places of work it is not unusual to talk about motivation and how to create motivation among the workers. It is a subject that has been widely discussed for a long time within the field of management and organization. The place of work for a student is the school and motivation is an essential element for them to carry out their studies; to study is to work and a student needs motivation like any other worker. It is possible to say that there is a relationship between the students and the school as there is a relation between a firm and its employees. This is why it is important that the school can motivate and give the feedback needed for the student to carry out his or her studies.

Earlier studies in work motivation have, among others, been made by Maslow, Hackman and Oldman. We will present their theories below.

#### ***Maslow***

Maslow (1954) deals with the subject of motivation from a perspective based on 'needs'. His theories are about how needs differ between individuals and how they affect the behavior of an individual. Maslow illustrates the different needs hierarchically. The needs are divided into five fundamental and basic needs; the physiological needs, the safety needs, the belongingness, love needs, the esteem needs and finally the need for self-actualization. There is a tendency among people to want to fulfill the needs one by one starting with the physiological needs. It may, however, differ between how well each need is fulfilled. Each need may not be fulfilled 100 percent; some of them are only fulfilled to a lesser degree.

Maslow mentions that there are exceptions; deviants who do not follow the order hierarchically. These exceptions depend on how the individual prioritizes. There are those who put more emphasis on self-esteem than on solidarity and love and there are those who value self-actualization before safety.

The physiological needs come from things we need in order to survive; food and water. When there is no supply of food and water, an acute need of it arises and the other needs are set aside until the need of food and water is fulfilled. When this need is fulfilled the safety needs arise, which encompasses both physical and emotional safety. This need also has the capacity to set aside other hierarchically superior needs just as the physiological needs set aside other needs in a situation of famine. If a person feels threatened it may be difficult for him or her to focus on needs other than the safety needs.

When the safety needs are fulfilled the focus passes on to the belongingness and love needs. The belongingness and love needs consist of emotional ties to others; for instance friends and partners. Furthermore, feeling solidarity with social groups is also important for the belongingness and love needs. Maslow predicted that the belongingness and love needs would increase because of the globalization that diminishes the distances and the increasing number of divorces. After the belongingness and love needs emerge the esteem needs. The esteem needs come from human beings wanting to be appreciated by others in order to satisfy her need of self-esteem and self-respect. Consequently the individual creates self-esteem and thus he or she feels useful and meaningful. The opposite is a situation that awakes basic human feelings such as helplessness, inferiority and weakness. The last need is the need for self-actualization. This need varies from individual to individual. Likewise it varies in the way it is obtained; one person obtains self-actualization in his role as a father while someone else obtains self-actualization in the role as a person of high station with a lot of responsibility. If a person has a job or other occupation that the person is not comfortable with, it will not matter if all the inferior needs are fulfilled. The person may still experience feelings such as dissatisfaction and restlessness.

### ***Hackman and Oldman***

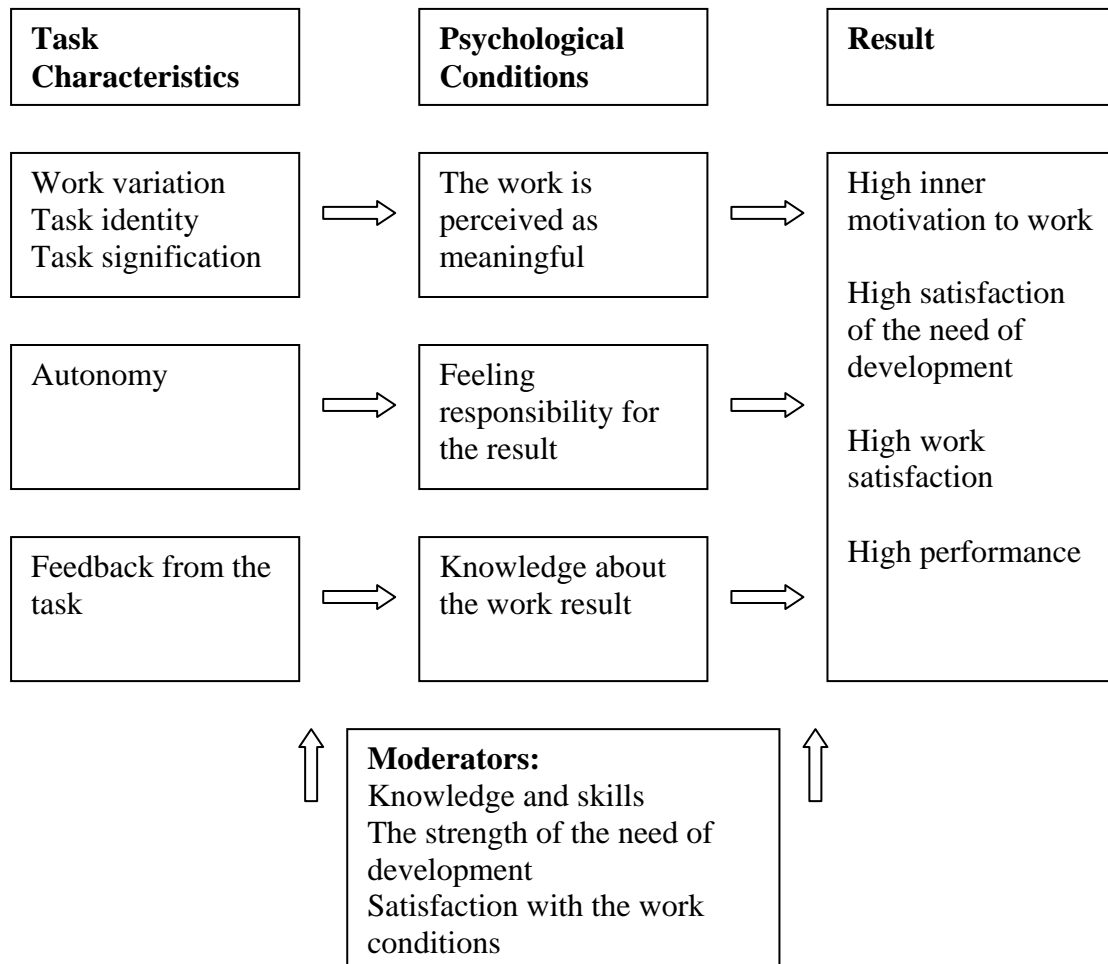
Hackman's and Oldman's (1980) theories illustrate how to motivate the employees and get them to perform as well as possible via the work structure. In the book *Work Redesign*, the authors present a motivation model. Their assumptions are that people work hard and want to perform well because it gives them an inner satisfaction. According to Hackman and Oldman, the term motivation is based on inner reward rather than external reward. An individual who is not content with his or her work contribution will feel dissatisfied. The person will therefore try to do better the next time to avoid the feeling of dissatisfaction. Three psychological conditions have to be fulfilled in order for a person to reach a high level of inner work motivation and these are:

1. The work must be perceived as meaningful.
2. The person must feel responsibility for the result.
3. Knowledge must exist about the work result.

It is not until these three psychological conditions are fulfilled that inner motivation for the work can be created. Since these conditions are psychological experiences that can only be perceived by the human mind, they have to be translated into something tangible in the model. There are also other conditions that contribute to the state of mind where work is perceived as meaningful and these are the following:

1. A mix of skills and talent considering the work assignment.
2. The task identity; if it constitutes a meaningful part of the greater whole and if the individual is participating in the progress from the beginning to the end.
3. The significance of the task both for the organization and people in and outside of it.

Autonomy means the level of independence, liberty and permission one has to structure their work. This is the same factor that contributes to the psychological condition where a person feels responsible for the work result. The third condition is reached via feedback and results in knowledge about the work result. In the model, feedback refers to the inner satisfaction that comes from the work accomplishment rather than feedback from co-workers and managers.




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**Figure 3.3 Motivation Model (Hackman & Oldman, 1980)**

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According to Hackman and Oldman, there are two groups of persons; one group who finds stimulation in work with high motivation potential and a group that does not find stimulation in this kind of work. They motivate these categorizations by defining moderators that affect the inner motivation:

1. Knowledge and skills
2. The strength in the need of development
3. Satisfaction with the work conditions

The most unsuitable situation for a person with low competence and a low desire for personal development is a job with high motivation potential. There is a risk that a person like that will experience complex tasks as insurmountable and lose motivation. This person may be better suited for other tasks. The most ideal situation is where a person with high competence and a great desire for professional development is positioned in a job with high motivation potential. A person like that will gain motivation from the job.

According to Hackman and Oldman, motivation is not something that is related to the different human characteristics. It is more a consequence of how the work is structured. The authors exemplify this with golf. Golf is a sport that they consider to be characterized by all the criteria needed to encourage motivation. When playing golf a person is allowed to think for oneself, structure the game tactics and the game gives immediate feedback on the result. Typical jobs that have a restraining influence on the motivation are performed manually and are often sedentary. These are jobs that have been planned by someone else; the one who worked out the manual. The person working with the task has not chosen the work routines and consequently he or she does not feel as responsible as they would otherwise.

### ***3.3 Theoretical Discussion***

We think the theories about service quality make good analysis tools in order to interpret the respondents' answers. We find it possible to compare the education to a service since it contains the elements that are clearly comparable to what classical theories interpret as a service. An important part in the models made by Berry et al. (1990) and Grönroos (1990) are the expectations that play a pivotal role in the view of quality, and considering the School of Economics and Commercial Law's reputation the expectations should be significant in this case too. When it comes to motivation and Maslow's theory, we have realized there is good reason to be critical; it is old and it is generalizing. What motivates us and what our needs are is different from person to person and differs between cultures. We do, however, still find that the theory has an explanatory value and may be useful in our analysis, which we also find for Hackman and Oldman's theory for motivation.

## Chapter 4

### The Students' Stories

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*In this chapter we illustrate the results we received from our interviews. To make the respondents' answers clear we sometimes chose to quote the answers and these are written in italics and with quotation marks. We divided the chapter into two parts on the basis of our interview guide. The first part is about the students' expectations and their views of the future and thereafter follows a part about the students' view and opinions of quality. The analysis follows after this chapter.*

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#### **4.1 The Students' Expectations and Views of the Future**

*The first part is about the students' expectations and views of the future. The expectations the students have for the education before attending the university is significant for the total experienced quality afterwards. During the interviews, the respondents described the thoughts that circulated in their minds before starting the education and what views they have of the future with regard to work and career.*

#### **Why the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg?**

When we asked the respondents why they think students in general choose to study in Gothenburg at the School of Economics and Commercial Law, the interviewees believe the primary reason is the school's status as one of the finest schools in Sweden for economic studies. Many of the interviewees mentioned that it looks good on paper to have a degree from the school. The school is, according to the respondents, only surpassed by its counterpart in Stockholm.

*"To have attended this school gives you a greater chance to get an interview when applying for a job."*

*"My friends from my former school told me that someone with my grades should apply for the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg. I did not know much about the school but apparently it had a very good reputation, which can not be a disadvantage."*

The secondary reason for choosing Gothenburg is believed to be geographical. The interviewees say they think that other students choose Gothenburg because they live in the city or in one of the municipalities in the area surrounding it, or just simply because they find the city itself attractive. However, when we asked why they themselves chose to study in Gothenburg they all mentioned geographical reasons as being the primary incitement prior to the school's status.

#### **The Students' Expectations of the Education**

The expectations the students have on their university studies are mainly job-oriented, which is exemplified by the following statement:

*"I am studying to get a job."*

The majority of the respondents expressed similar expectations. Only in afterthought do the interviewees comment on any expectations they might have on the education itself. It is, however, clear that the expectations of the education is high due to the school's very good reputation.

*"I have very high expectations for the school. After all, it is one of best schools in the country."*

The students said they expect a high overall quality and competent teachers and good fellow students. The interviewees expressed a thirst for a broad economic knowledge base and a good understanding of the subject of economy.

Three of the interviewees also mentioned they expect to be taught how to maintain a critical line of thought and how to become problem solvers. When it comes to what purpose the interviewees have with their studies, the most common answer was that they want to get *a good and interesting job* in the future.

### ***The Respondents' Views on an Ideal Education***

The respondents expect more practical experience and a more direct connection to the commercial life than they consider themselves to have received during their time at the school in Gothenburg. They also expressed a desire for a greater understanding of what the professional life as an economist really means. A firmer link to real life is desired. Some of the interviewees would also like to see smaller classes as they feel inhibited in such large groups as the classes are today. Students who took separate courses outside the study programs feel that they want more lectures while students attending the Bachelor Program in Business and Economics were of the opposite opinion; they want fewer lectures.

### ***The Future***

The majority of the respondents expressed some degree of anxiety about the future as they consider themselves as unaware of what it means to work in a company with the job assignments that they are being educated for. Most of them feel uncertain about what is expected of them by their future employers and if they will be able to meet those expectations. Some of the respondents claim that one cannot ever be totally prepared as all workplaces are different and work in different separate ways. At the same time the respondents do not think that the companies expect that a newly graduated student will be able to know everything and handle everything for themselves on first day at work.

### ***Chances of Getting a Job after Graduation***

When it comes to the respondents' views on their possibilities to get a job after graduation, most of them believe that it is mostly up to individual ability. It is not enough to just have a business economics degree. That is why many students engage in out-of-school activities, study abroad or get qualified summer jobs; all just to get some extra experience and gain an extra edge on the competition. The students express anxiety about their possibilities of future employment.

*"You get the feeling that you have something to contribute when you are writing your personal letter but apparently it is not enough; what else should one have to complement?"*

Students think their biggest rivals when applying for jobs are other economists with more work experience or other students who have connections to the company in question. Many wish that there were more trainee opportunities during the education in order to come in contact with important presumptive employers. Those who choose to major in accounting or finance are believed to have the greatest chances of getting a job followed by those majoring in marketing and finally management and organization.



## **4.2 Quality**

*Below follows the answers the respondents gave with regard to quality. The interview guide was distributed in advance so they could freely reflect over the term “quality”, and then we asked them to comment on the different quality aspects we took into consideration from the National Agency for Higher Education’s judgments of quality.*

### **What is Quality?**

When we asked the students what quality is to them we received a lot of different answers. One of the things mentioned is that the school should keep a high and even standard for the education. The students want to do the right things the right way. They also want the education to be relevant. There should be a main thread throughout each course that should be easy to follow. High quality in the course literature as well as a wide variety of courses are also considered important factors. The most commonly mentioned quality factor is the necessity of good and qualified lecturers, but they not only need to be qualified and knowledgeable; it is equally important that they are pedagogical.

*“Quality is when the students manage to assimilate as much information as possible in the subject that is being taught. In order for the students to do so, competent lecturers are a crucial requirement.”*

*“Quality is a question of competent lecturers.”*

*“Good lecturers are absolutely the most important thing for good quality.”*

*“Quality is synonymous with good and inspiring lecturers.”*

When we asked the respondents what the most important factor for good quality is, the majority answer that the lecturers are most important. The lecturers must be knowledgeable and be able to relay their knowledge in a good way to the students. Other important factors mentioned are the people responsible for the planning and organization of the program and a lot of scheduled lectures.

### **Opinions About the Lecturers’ Competence**

There are a lot of opinions about the overall competence among the lecturers. It is possible to divide the opinions into two groups; those who find the overall competence to be sufficient and those who do not. There is a slight predominance of those who are dissatisfied. Though all seem to agree that the lecturers are knowledgeable, those that have opinions about the lecturers base their ideas on their pedagogic teaching abilities.

*“I find most of the lecturers competent and I am generally pleased with the lecturers.”*

*“It is somewhat tragic when you are surprised to suddenly find yourself with a good lecturer. It should be the other way around.”*

*“One problem regarding lecturer competence is that they often possess vast amounts of knowledge but are unable to convey it to the students. It would be preferable if they took pedagogic training courses.”*

*“I have come in contact with lecturers that are knowledgeable but unable to teach. They are terrible educators.”*

### **Opinions About the Curriculum**

Most interviewees are satisfied with the education's curriculum. Some of the respondents do, however, express a desire for less theoretic and more practical elements in the education. They feel as though the strictly theoretic curriculum gives all the knowledge they need but no experience on how to apply it practically.

*"The education does not contain any real practice. You can attend this school for four years without ever setting foot in a real office. There is no connection to real working life. I think there is a big difference between school and reality."*

*"I would like more contact with different companies; some kind of trainee visits or just study visits. Any contact of any kind would be great."*

*"I would like to gain knowledge on how you act in real life. I think that a connection between real life and our education is lacking. It is too theoretical and sometimes I do not understand what I am supposed to do with all of these old moth-eaten theories."*

When it comes to the work load there are a lot of different opinions. The majority of the interviewees think that the workload is too high and that it has consequences on the learning ability. One opinion, among others, is that there is too little time to reflect over what you have just learnt.

*"It is often stressful and you do not have time to reflect over what you have just learnt. It feels like you are just learning momentarily for the exam. Sometimes there are so many things going on at once that it is easy to lose motivation."*

*"The work load is too high. In this pace of learning I feel as though the school is encouraging superficial learning. There is no time to reflect."*

*"I would have learnt more if there was only time to reflect. Now it feels like I am just cramming myself full of information."*

Overall, the students are pleased with the forms of examination. They think there is a good mix of written examinations and group projects. They express feeling stress before written examinations but would not prefer an alternate form of examination instead of the classic written one. They do, however, have opinions about the written examinations as they do not always find them properly reflecting the contents of the course.

*"It does not matter how much you study your course literature. The written exams seldom properly reflect the contents of the courses; you usually learn new things by studying old exams. In some courses you exclusively have to study old exams in order to pass the examination. Then you know something is wrong."*

*"Another disturbing thing is when the examiners write bad exam questions that the students do not understand."*

Another opinion is that there are too many little assignments that take too much time and just get in the way of the central subject of the course.

*"Sometimes it is all the little assignments that take up a lot of time. They just add to the stress and they do not contribute to one's learning."*

*"As far as I can see the little assignments have had no impact whatsoever on your over all grade."*

Another common opinion is that the students miss not having a methodology course before writing their bachelor's thesis. The following is said with regard to the bachelor's thesis;

*"It feels as though you are all of the sudden being thrown into something that you are supposed to handle with ease."*

They would like to be taught how to handle this kind of information earlier in the education. Also, a course on information retrieval is something the respondents believe would have been useful earlier in the education.

### ***The Views on the School's Resources***

The interviewees replied that they find the school's resources to be satisfying overall. They are especially satisfied with the library and its staff, even if there are too few seats.

*"I am generally satisfied with the library except for the fact that there are too few seats."*

*"It is a beautiful library with a very obliging staff. I have no complaints."*

All but one of the respondents are, however, very displeased with the availability of group rooms. It should perhaps be mentioned that the one student who is not displeased with the availability of group rooms usually studies at home. The interviewees also find the group rooms to be too small and poorly ventilated. Similar critique is being passed on the about computer halls. They are too few and they offer very poor working conditions.

*"The group rooms are totally worthless at this school."*

*"There are all too few group rooms. It seems as though no one has thought to adjust the amount of group projects versus the availability of places where you can sit and work together as a group."*

*"There are too few computer halls. Furthermore, they are neither open and bright nor fresh-looking, and there are far too few computers."*

With the exception of the group rooms, the students are pleased with the school premises. Most interviewees are also pleased with the status of the equipment in the lecture halls such as computers, projectors, lighting and so forth. Another thing sought after are natural gathering points where one can just sit comfortably and chat in a sofa or something similar.

*"The school premises are extremely good. That is something that we are spoiled with here at our school."*

*"We are blessed with a very nice work environment here at our school but there are no natural places for social meetings."*

*"I miss social gathering points where you can meet up and just talk. As it is now, all there is are some stiff and tedious benches."*

The students are happy with the administrative personnel who they find to be available and willing to help whenever needed. They do not, however, find that there are enough teachers to go around and refer this problem to the fact that they think there are too many students attending the school in proportion to the number of teachers. The interviewees feel as though the teachers are willing to help but they just do not have the time to do so. The classes are too big which makes the students more inhibited; they do not dare ask any questions during class and there is no room for natural discussion in class.

*"The teachers become more of a speaker and you just sit there and let them cram the information into your head."*

Many miss a natural contact with the teachers with time for conversation and feedback on what they are doing.

*"The only feedback you get from the teachers are the grade, but that does not tell you very much."*

### **EQUIS-Accreditation**

Only half of the interviewees had heard that the school had received an EQUIS-accreditation and few of them knew exactly what it meant. All, however, do agree that it is something positive for the school; the respondents all had positive remarks when they were informed about what the EQUIS-accreditation implies. Although the accreditation itself does not concern any of the aspects of quality that the individual interviewees prioritized themselves during the interview, they all believe that is a positive thing as it gives the school an incentive to keep trying to maintain a high standard. Most of the interviewees hope that the EQUIS-accreditation will make it easier for students to study abroad and to be able to accredit the foreign grades back home. Studying at an EQUIS-accredited school is also believed to give the students a better chance of employment abroad. Here are some spontaneous comments from those who did not know about the EQUIS-accreditation prior to the interviews:

*"It will probably look good on paper; a degree from an EQUIS-accredited school is probably better than a degree from a non-accredited one."*

*"It probably is a good merit when looking for work abroad."*

*"I think that it is good as it gives my education greater relevance abroad, and also because I think that it is important for as many schools as possible to have the same standards in order to make it easier for students to transfer between schools."*

### **Collaborations and Partnerships**

All the interviewees have opinions about partnerships in general as well as on the current existing ones. When it comes to collaborations and partnerships in general, the students find them positive both with different companies and with other universities. They are considered to give the students a greater chance to come in touch with the trade and industry and to study abroad.

*“It is good for those who like to travel. Today employers want you to have spent time abroad and talk many languages and have met people from different cultures.”*

The opinions part when it comes to collaborations with the trade and industry. Some of the interviewees said they did not notice any presence at all during their education with the exception of when the yearly labor market days and guest lecturers are held at school. Others emphasize the lack of practical training and trainee opportunities, which are considered important in order to anchor the education to the real life.

*“It would have been great to see how everything actually works; two weeks would have been enough. It is also important to make new acquaintances which might facilitate finding work in the future.”*

Despite all the praise regarding collaborations and partnerships in general, some discontent is expressed regarding partnerships with domestic universities. The discontent concerns stories about students who transfer from other smaller universities to finish their education in Gothenburg. As it appears today, the different business and economic educations around the country are not homogeneous. Getting a degree is therefore considered easier for those who study their first years at a smaller university, where the requirements of performance are lower, and then take their last semesters in Gothenburg. It is not considered fair, but at the same time the students oppose the thought of being locked to a specific university just because you started there. Therefore, many of the interviewees express a wish for a national standard covering all of the schools in the country in order to make such transfers fair and easy.

### ***The Possibility to Influence the Education’s Curriculum and Content***

When we asked the respondents what possibilities they have to influence the education they spontaneously thought of the course evaluations as their chance of influencing the structure of the education. There are no opinions about the course evaluations themselves. If anything is lacking it is probably the students’ commitment to completing the evaluation forms and turning them in. All of the students do not seem to be interested in having influence; some because they do not feel that the improvement they might achieve by participating will benefit themselves and others because they feel that their opinions will not be taken seriously. In spite of this, most of the respondents have good faith in the teachers’ and the school’s good intentions with the course evaluations. Many of the interviewees desire to see a summary of the evaluations after as they had all been dealt with.

*“The only time someone ever asked for my opinion was at the end of the course when I got to fill out a course evaluation form; what happens to those once you turn them in? I heard by word-of-mouth that some of the students last year in the Bachelor Program in Business and Economics had opinions about there being too few lectures in a difficult course, which actually resulted in more lectures being given. That is amazing. I think that the teachers and the school are interested and that they do listen to the students’ opinions but I miss hearing feedback from administration like committee meetings and so on. Perhaps they could post a summary with the results of the evaluations on one of the billboards or on the Internet?”*

Some dissatisfaction was expressed regarding when the evaluations are handed out but few had any ideas of a better occasion.

*“The only time I felt as if I had a chance to influence our education was when I was handed the course evaluation, but I did not have time to fill it out as it was given to me just before my written examination; I cannot evaluate a course if I have not written the exam yet. I think that the course evaluation should be done after the whole course is finished and preferably over the Internet.”*

*“I feel that there should be an open discussion half way through the course when you still have time to change and influence. When the course evaluation has been filled out it is already too late, very few people really commit during the final stage of the course.”*

Those who attend the Bachelor Program in Business and Economics seem to know more about where to turn if they want to get involved in different decision-making committees than those who only take separate courses outside the program. Likewise, the program attendees seem to know more people that are involved in such organs than those taking separate courses.

### ***The Depth of the Education and the Education's Anchor to Real Life***

All of the respondents find the business economics education very broad. There are many different fields of business economics in which you can choose to concentrate. All agree that a wide common knowledge in business economics is a good foundation. The education is not considered too wide as soon as one gets to choose a field of economics to concentrate in. The academic level of the education is considered to be high and genuine. There are mixed opinions about whether the education is up-to-date and in touch with real life or not. When one looks at the curriculum it seems that the contents of the basic courses are more classically oriented with old-fashioned theories whereas the courses taken at a higher level seem to be more up-to-date with modern science. The structure, organization and contents of the courses are seen as a responsibility shared by the teachers and those responsible for the curriculum. When it comes to practical experience, all of the respondents say that there is far too little of it and that they want more. The only contact with the business world has been some sporadic guest lecturers.

*“Perhaps you could do something like they do at Chalmers with the engineers where the students have to practice in real life for a number of weeks before obtaining a degree.”*

Many are afraid of what their future employers expect of them and that they will not be able to live up to those expectations;

*“I feel that today's employers have too high requirements. I feel as though they are looking for a just-in-time student who they can use like a battery and then just throw away when it is run down.”*

According to the respondents, the practical experience with different computer programs such as SPCS and other business systems is little among the students. The opinions differ when it comes to the relevance of being familiar with such computer programs. Some feel that it is good to have at least tried the programs in question. Others feel that computer programs are continuously upgraded, changed or replaced and that it would just be a waste of time to learn how to use them.

During the interviews we asked the respondents if they missed something in the education and what they thought should be added. Many mentioned missing the use of information technology as a tool in their education. Several of them want to see much more information retrieval for different kinds of data in the education; financial, scientific, statistics and so forth. They want to practice this specific tool because they feel that the business world and the international economy are too wide to get a grip on. Other things the respondents mentioned during the interviews were; less focus on companies listed on the stock exchange and more emphasize towards smaller companies, more elementary law studies and more concentration towards the international economy.

### **9§ University Regulation**

We tied up all of the interviews by letting the respondents read the ninth paragraph of the University Regulation (9§ Högskolelagen, 2001:1263) and comment freely row for row with the exception of the last part that says; \_ \_ \_” *The research studies shall, \_ \_ \_*”. It is not relevant to our respondents. We chose to illustrate the content of the ninth paragraph both in the appendix and below to facilitate for the reader;

*”9§ The elementary university education shall give the students*

- capability to do independent and critical judgments,*
- capability to independently distinguish, formulate and solve problems, and*
- readiness to face changes in the working life.*

*Within the concerned education’s field the students shall, in addition to knowledge and skills, develop capability to*

- search and evaluate knowledge on a scientific level,*
  - follow the development of knowledge, and*
  - exchange knowledge with individuals who do not have specialist knowledge within the field.*
- The research studies shall, in addition to what counts for the elementary university education, give the knowledge and skills needed to independently be able to pursue research.*  
*Law (2001:1263).”*

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### ***Own translation of the 9§ University Regulation (9§ Högskolelagen, 2001:1263)***

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The students find that the ninth paragraph represents the business economics education pretty well, but many of the respondents also feel that it is over ambitiously formulated by the legislator, as a respondent said:

*”I would like to point that the time and resources are limited and I think focus should be on learning new things. I do not think this should be incorporated before the C-level. One is not mature enough yet. Instead one needs to learn the elementary facts before one can go and become an expert and manage on one’s own. I would like to see that they add in the law; do this as far as time and place allows but do not forget to read your books first.”*

The general perception about the first part of the ninth paragraph is quite homogenous among the respondents. The respondents feel that the education gives the “*capability to do independent and critical judgments and capability to independently distinguish, formulate and solve problems*” through the following various efforts; handed in assignments, group assignments, projects and so forth.

The last passage, “*readiness to face changes in the working life*”, is interpreted in different ways and many of the respondents do not understand what the law means by this phrase. The interviewees find the phrase incomprehensible and its meaning hard to make out.

*“This was obscure; what do they mean? I would have preferred instead if it said readiness to face the working life.”*

*“The working life? I do not even know what that means yet. Perhaps it may be that the business economics education is so general that one can quickly and easily find information but at the same time it is not clear what changes in the working life means.”*

*“I do not understand what it is supposed to mean; changes in the working life? Do they mean changes in how to work and what tools to work with?”*

Concerning the second part of the ninth paragraph, “*search and evaluate knowledge on scientific level*”, the respondents feel it is an element that is elevated at the C-level. It is worth mentioning that four of the respondents commented that it is not due to the education that they learned to search for the knowledge and instead they expressed their wishes for a method course:

*“This is something we do well here and now when writing our papers, even if it is possible to discuss the method. I would like to see more method literature and classes on the method part.”*

Considering the last two rows of the second part in the ninth paragraph, “*follow the development of knowledge and exchange knowledge also with individuals who do not have specialist knowledge within the field*”, most of the respondents reacted by emphasizing the individual responsibility in keeping oneself updated with the development of knowledge and comment that the capability to exchange knowledge is not something they feel they learned from their education. One respondent believes that the last phrase is infected with great deficiencies. He thinks that specifically within the field of business economics, everybody assumes that other people understand and are familiar with the subject. This is very clear, according to him, just by looking at different assignments such as memos. Memos are written on the basis that they are going to be read by another business economist. This is something he reacts strongly to since in the working life it does not work this way; at a business with all kinds of positions it is important that everyone can understand a report, he argues.



## Chapter 5

### Analysis of the Students' Stories

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*In this chapter we interpret and try to understand the answers given by the respondents. We do this using the theories we illustrated in the theoretical framework. This chapter is structured the same way as Chapter Four, meaning that it will be divided into two parts; expectations and future, and quality.*

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#### **5.1 The Students' Expectations and Views of the Future**

*Almost all of the respondents have high expectations of the School of Economics and Commercial Law, and as a consequence the requirements for the education are very high. The respondents expressed concern for the future. We, however, feel that the answers give hope of a bright future; the respondents think their future will be determined by their own abilities to promote themselves, an ability they estimate to be good. In this chapter we will illustrate how this and other things that were concluded in Chapter Four can be interpreted.*

#### **The Students' Expectations of the Education**

Most of the respondents gave quick answers on this subject; the expectations of the education are to eventually find a job with the help of their obtained degree, consequently they also expect to be taught the knowledge and skills needed when it is time to begin one's career. If we choose to view the students as customers, this would resemble what Grönroos (1990) calls the *customer's need*. The students desire good and interesting jobs. In order to enhance the chances of getting the job they wish for they applied to the School of Economics and Commercial Law. Second to the expectations of finding a job are the expectations of obtaining a wide base of knowledge within the field of business economics. We find this to be somewhat of a paradox. The respondents wish for specific knowledge about how things operate in the working life at the same time as they want to be spared from *old moth-eaten theories*, which we interpret as belonging to the wide base of knowledge within field of business economics.

Apart from the expectations that the education will eventually lead to a job, the School of Economics and Commercial Law has high expectations to live up to because of its good reputation. Judging from the respondents' answers, the school is considered to be one of the finest in the country. For instance, one of the respondents chose to apply to the school because the respondent had heard about the school's good reputation by *word-of-mouth*. The expectations of the education are therefore elevated and the education is expected to maintain a high level of quality. The students who had previously studied at other universities naturally compared the School of Economics and Commercial Law with their earlier experiences. According to Berry et al. (1990) and the GAP-model, the earlier experiences contribute to the *expected quality*. If one comes from a less renowned school one will naturally expect more from the School of Economics and Commercial Law. According to Grönroos (1990), it is both a question about the expectations on *technical* and *functional quality*. *Technical quality* refers to the expectation to obtain valuable knowledge and a degree from one of the country's finest schools. The *functional quality* refers to the expectations of how and in what way to obtain the degree. All of this put together illustrates what Grönroos (1990) calls the *expected quality*. This is later compared to the *experienced quality*, and together the *expected quality* and the *experienced quality* result in the *total perceived quality*. By this we imply that if the quality is to be perceived as satisfactory, the school has to be able to live up to the students' high expectations.

If the students would have chosen a less renowned school their expectations would probably not have been as high. Therefore a less renowned school would not have to attain the same level of quality in order to be perceived as satisfactory.

The marketing and information from the School of Economics and Commercial Law is also a part of the *expected quality*. There is a risk in having a good reputation; high expectations that cannot be met results in discontent. Berry et al. (1990) bring this problem up for discussion in the *GAP 1*, 4 and 5, which all deal with the customer's expectations in some way or another. The *expected quality* is mostly determined by the students' past and their prior experiences. It is also a consequence of the school's marketing. The customer, or the student in this case, later compares their *expected quality* to the *experienced quality*. In addition there are different perceptions about quality that lead to many kinds of sources which in turn fit into various types of *GAPs* in the *GAP-Model*. There is no attuned view of the term *quality*. Consequently, misconceptions may occur between supplier and customer regarding the information from the School of Economics and Commercial Law.

### ***The Respondents' Views of an Ideal Education***

When the respondents tried to describe how an ideal education would look almost all of them chose to answer in relation and comparison to the education given by the school. Many of them used phrases and expressions such as *it should be better* or *there should be more*, etc., in comparison to how they experience the education as it is now. The respondents tended to speak about things they are not pleased with. This led us to the interpretation that factors the interviewees do not mention or comment on already reach a satisfactory level. This is something we felt throughout the interview work. They do, however, express an overall satisfaction with the education and also comment on what they experience to be good at the School of Economics and Commercial Law.

Maslow (1954) deals with motivation from a need-based perspective; *physiological needs*, *security needs*, *social needs*, *the need of status and prestige* and finally *the need of self-fulfillment*. These different needs and their relative hierarchical order are applicable to different work and life situations. If we look at the respondents and their situation as students, we draw the conclusion that the basic needs are saturated within the terms of reference; the students have been accepted to the school and they have an income to support their studies, literature and pens, etc. The respondents seem to be satisfied overall with their situation but there is an ambition to reach a higher level; they want *better* and *more*, which is something characterized by the hierarchically superior needs. It is a question about improving an already good situation. Some of the respondents gave propositions about what could be done but not all of them are feasible, which they agree with. The reason is, as we interpret it, that they are talking about and giving suggestions of how to create an ideal education.

Regarding the question about the ideal education, almost all of the respondents commented that it should include practice and have a clear connection to the working life. This is something the respondents feel they miss in their education with the exception of guest lecturers and labor market days. This should, however, not be confused with the wish the respondents have about actually participating in the working life. There is a desire to participate in the working life and see how business systems are used and how they are actually operated. We see a link between the *expected quality* and what is considered the ideal education. Even if an ideal education is not expected by the respondents, they have expectations that lie close to what is considered an ideal education. The respondents also express a wish for smaller classes as they lack space for natural discussions during class.

Rather than expressing immediate discontent the respondents gave suggestions to how they think that the education can be improved. An example is the wish for practice. It seems important to have control over the knowledge, what is learned and to be able to put this knowledge into practice. The wish for practice seems to come from the fear of what is expected from them in the labor market. Many feel insecure about entering the labor market and meeting their future employers. They do not feel confident that their expertise and knowledge is sufficient in the labor market and they think that they will need to complement it to a large extent. The respondents feel they would have more control over their knowledge if they had a chance to practice it in real life. This is connected to the expectations that the education will eventually lead to a job opportunity.

### **Chances of Getting a Job after Graduation**

The respondents' expectations are to get jobs after graduating. In spite of their overall good view about the school's *reputation, image* and *word-of-mouth*, many of them are skeptical and worried about the future. When Grönroos (1990) illustrates *technical quality* he refers to *what* the customer receives while *functional quality* refers to *how* the customer receives the service. In our case, *technical quality* will refer to the lectures, the curriculum, the degree, and so forth. We therefore interpret that the respondents' expectations of *technical quality* are to get a degree that will later lead to a job opportunity. The expectations of *functional quality* are to receive good lectures from competent teachers. Together they result in *total perceived quality*. In spite of what is considered to be a prominent degree, many of the respondents are worried about going out into the labor market. This is something we interpret as conflicting with the expectations of *technical quality* since the expectations of obtaining a job after the studies are not believed to be fulfilled. This fact becomes clearer to us as we see that many of the respondents try to fill the gap in the *technical quality* by engaging in out-of-school activities to obtain extra experience to add to their curriculum vitae. This way they hope to be more competitive in the labor market.

## **5.2 Quality**

*The respondents emphasized that the teachers' competence is very central in the judgment of the quality. How it is judged is strongly connected to the high expectations of the School of Economics and Commercial Law in Gothenburg. We will analyze this and much more below.*

### **What is Quality?**

The teachers' competence is very essential in the respondents' view on quality. The respondents do not believe it is possible to obtain a good level of quality without competent teachers. What characterizes a competent and good teacher, according to the interviewees, is that he or she possesses a lot of knowledge but most importantly that the teacher is pedagogical in the way he or she teaches. This resembles what Grönroos (1990) calls *professionalism, expert knowledge, communication* and *customer relationships*, but in our case is referring to teachers. According to the respondents, quality is not a question about the organization of the School of Economics and Commercial Law; it is a question about the teachers. We found that the respondents view the teachers as representatives for the education and consequently the teachers are what first come to mind when they grade the quality of the education. Not only are the teachers to be pedagogical, they are also supposed to be devoted teachers who can create motivation and interest for the subject in question. When students feel motivated in their work they also experience the quality as good. Those teachers who are judged to be incompetent by the respondents are those who do not create motivation.

They feel that it is difficult to assimilate the teaching and that it leads to a lot of time required for self-tuition at home.

This eventually leads to a loss of control over the working situation which in its turn affects the motivation negatively. The subject is then not as interesting as before and therefore we suggest that motivation is strongly connected to the perception of quality. The school's view of quality is a much greater spectrum and is not only limited to the lecturers' teaching situation. This results in the creation of a *gap* regarding quality. The students believe that it is the school's obligation to live up to their quality demands. But the school has a variety of different obligations to fulfill that are much more diversified than the students seem to know. That is why the students' and the school's views on quality differ.

There are different views about the teachers' competence and we can distinguish two groups; one group who find the competence generally adequate and one group who find it insufficient. None of the respondents have any comments on the teachers' expertise. Those who have comments and remarks have so about the teachers' way to communicate; the so-called *customer relationship*. These respondents are not satisfied with the teaching and the way knowledge is relayed to them. They feel as though the teachers speak their own language and that they do not profit from the teaching. The respondents as customers do not feel that they get what they want from the teachers. Perhaps it is possible that there is a *gap*, here too. Teachers have many different roles and obligations at the university and one of them is to lecture. Their view of their roles at the university are however probably not only limited to their role as lecturers. The students do, however, often perceive them as just lecturers. There are different views on what teachers are supposed to do. Since teaching is only a part of a greater whole for the teachers, it is possible they perceive their work efforts as a whole to reach a satisfying quality level. The students, on the other hand, only judge primarily the lecturers' performances during class and then with regard to the pedagogical skills.

In large classes the respondents also feel that it is difficult to have natural discussions with the lecturers. There is always a distance to the lecturer which affects one of the quality aspects Grönroos (1990) calls *accessibility*. Even if the teachers are accessible after the classes, the respondents miss the natural interaction during the classes. The respondents also feel that teachers are often stressed and do not have time for them which affects the experienced *accessibility*. Nevertheless, all of the respondents feel that the teachers want to help when they can and that they care for them, which create *credibility* and *reliability*.

### ***Opinions About the Curriculum***

Most of the respondents are satisfied with the curriculum. The selection of courses is sufficient and the respondents are also satisfied with the way the courses are carried out. What the interviewees feel they miss is actual practice. Many feel that the education is too theoretically based. This can be compared to what is written about the *expected quality*. The students expect to obtain knowledge about how things operate in real life and they find that part missing in the education. Work experience motivates the students as it teaches them how to apply what they know in real life work situations.

When it comes to the work load, many of the respondents say they feel stressed which has consequences on their learning ability. They feel that it is more difficult to study under pressure. Many of the respondents feel they are not learning for life. They feel as though they are only learning momentarily in order to pass the exam. The high tempo makes the students feel they lose control over their work situation.

Even though the students are responsible for their own work effort and can make up their own schedules, the high pace forces them to have constant stress even if they plan ahead. There is no time for reflection. Because of the pressure the work assignments are not as interesting as they might have been otherwise; they are done because they have to be done but without interest and inspiration. When the students cannot put the time and effort needed into the assignments it is also difficult to solve them in a satisfying way. This results in students handing in assignments with which they are not satisfied. The high work load makes the students lose motivation, which also affects the *experienced quality*. This assumption is also supported by Hackman and Oldman's theory that proclaims when people lose motivation they do not feel the same responsibility towards the assignment as they would if they were motivated for the tasks they are assigned to perform. When the work burden is too high one starts to prioritize. Things considered less significant have to be disregarded in order to loosen up the whole work burden. Knowledge learnt momentarily is only temporary knowledge. We interpret this to be the reason why the students do not experience they have enough knowledge to enter the labor market, which is their aim. When the students, as in this case, do not feel that the school comes up to the *expected quality*, they feel that the quality falls short from certain perspectives. It is important to point out that we do not feel that the respondents are passing critique. They are simply pointing out flaws that they believe need to be taken care of.

### ***The Views of the School's Resources***

In general, the respondents are satisfied with the school's resources. The respondents feel that the school offers sufficient resources for them to carry out their studies. They are especially satisfied with the school library and its personnel. When it comes to the library's personnel, the quality determinants *attitude* and *appearance* described by Grönroos are positively depicted by the respondents. They feel that the personnel are always nice, obliging and willing to help the students to solve their problems. Their *expertise* and *professionalism* is praised by the interviewees. When it comes to the *appearance* of the library and its physical environment the students are also very satisfied. Grönroos (1990) also mentions *accessibility* as one of the quality determinants and some of the respondents are unhappy about the seating capacity in the library. Nevertheless, the *experienced quality* is satisfying.

Something almost all of the respondents complain about is that there are too few group rooms. In this case it is a question of *accessibility*. The general view is that there are too few group rooms in relation to the number of students and group assignments that are being handed out during the semester. The school assigns its students tasks to solve in groups, but according to the respondents the school cannot offer the proper facilities in which to solve them. Since the school cannot offer group rooms to work in it usually results in students having to meet at someone's home. The lack of group rooms gives rise to dissatisfaction. The respondents feel that the lack of facilities inhibits them from working together as a group. This shows that the students cannot do their work in their working place; the school. This leads to dissatisfaction among the students.

For the very same reason, the respondents are not satisfied with the computer halls either; there are too few and they are too crowded. It is again a question of what Grönroos (1990) calls *accessibility*. The students also express a wish for the possibility of connecting to the Internet through a wireless network. This would enable the students to use their own computers and sit elsewhere, thus utilizing the school premises more efficiently. The respondents also feel that the working environment is not satisfactory in the computer halls. Bad air quality is the primary reason for the criticism of the computer halls.

When the respondents talk about the school's premises such as the lecture rooms and other rooms in the school, they are satisfied. They are also content with the equipment in the lecture rooms. The quality determinants that Grönroos (1990) calls *appearance* and *tangibility* are in this case the physical environment. From the respondents' answers we interpret that they find the school to be nice, clean, new and fresh-looking and that it increases their motivation. They feel lucky to attend such a nice and prominent school and are motivated and inspired by such exclusive surroundings. As mentioned earlier, the motivation affects the students' views of quality.

The students are content with the administrative personnel. Many of Grönroos' quality determinants are touched upon by the respondents including; *professionalism, expertise knowledge, accessibility, flexibility, attitudes, reliability* and *credibility*. The students feel that the personnel are there to help them when they need it and that they have the students' best interest at heart. They easily adapt to the students' needs and questions and perform their services in the best way possible. The respondents have full confidence in the school's administrative personnel.

### **EQUIS-Accreditation**

Not many of the respondents knew what EQUIS was and that the school was recently accredited by EQUIS. After explaining EQUIS to those who did not know of it, they all responded positively. They were happy to hear that the school is constantly working to maintain a certain level of quality of the education. This is again an expression for the respondents' wishes for *better* and *more*.

It seems to be a question of improving one's situation and to strive towards the ideal education. The news about how the school comes up to an international standard and that it has been accredited by an international organization made the students proud of their school.

Maslow (1954) mentions the *esteem needs* and the *need for self-actualization*. These are needs which are positively affected by the EQUIS-accreditation. The respondents feel that their education and degree increases in value and is now more relevant internationally, which is very important to those who eventually want to work abroad. Moreover the respondents feel that it will facilitate studying abroad and getting such educations accredited at home.

Many of the respondents have confidence in the school's education because of its good reputation. As a consequence of the reputation we feel that most students are insecure about what is reasonable to demand from the school. During the interviews we noticed that the criteria that had to be fulfilled in order to obtain the EQUIS-accreditation were similar to the students' expectations. Nevertheless we felt that the students' *expected quality* increased as they got to know that an outside organization verified the quality of the school. Consequently we interpret that the respondents' *total perceived quality* is enhanced. The EQUIS-accreditation affects both Grönroos' quality dimensions; the *technical* and the *functional*. The *technical quality*, in this case *what* the customer obtains, is positively affected by the respondents' enhanced view on their education. It is affected in the sense that they feel that their education and degree increases in value and is more relevant internationally. The *functional quality*, in this case *how* the students perceive the quality of the service, is also affected by the respondents' new enhanced view of their education. Their new enhanced view of the education makes them think that it is better and therefore causes the students' *total perceived quality* to increase.

As a consequence of the EQUIS-accreditation the respondents' view of the education's quality is enhanced and therefore we interpret that their *total perceived quality* increases. As we see it, the EQUIS-accreditation itself affects the *functional quality* while the benefits of the EQUIS-accreditation affects the *technical quality*.

### ***Collaborations and Partnerships***

Partnerships with other universities and the business world are something the respondents feel is positive and expands their future possibilities. We feel as though the respondents put high value on having the possibility to study abroad and to get in touch with businesses. The opinions differed among the respondents regarding how satisfied they are with the collaborations and partnerships with other universities and the trade and industry.

Partnerships with other universities are not of interest to all of the respondents but still they value the possibility to study abroad for those who wish to do so. Many comment on what they think of as a great opportunity; to be able to study abroad if one wants to travel and learn new languages. We, however, feel that the opportunity to study abroad is something taken for granted by the respondents. The respondents do not specifically say that they expect to be able to study abroad but they seem to consider it implied that one should be able to do so and therefore they do not mention it. We feel that they emphasize how important it is to have experiences to add to the curriculum vitae. From the respondents' answers we interpret that studying abroad is a good experience and that they feel many employers demand it today.

To study abroad is expected as a part of the education. Consequently, we come to the conclusion that if it was not possible to study abroad, the *total perceived quality* of the education would decrease.

Apart from the *technical* and *functional* quality dimensions, Grönroos (1990) also mentions a third factor that affects the *total perceived quality*; the so-called *expected quality*. According to Grönroos (1990), the *expected quality* is a combination of the following factors; *market communication, image, word-of-mouth and customer needs*. The School of Economics and Commercial Law is a prominent school with a good reputation and it has many partnerships with other universities around the world. Many of the respondents applied to the school for this very reason. This means that their expectations for possibilities to engage in different activities are higher than what they would be in a smaller university. The respondents thus have a higher *expected quality* that affects their *total perceived quality*.

When talking about collaborations with the business world we feel that the respondents generally miss this part and that they would like to see more of it. We interpreted this from the respondents' comments on how they experience that they only come in contact with the trade and industry in contexts such as the labor market days and when there are guest lecturers at the school. Many respondents also clearly express a desire for practice in working life or comment on the lack of such practice. We feel that in both cases the respondents want feedback from real life to their education in order to obtain an understanding of what they do but also to have a chance to get in touch with possible future employers. The wish for practice could have its roots in a fear of the future and of what will happen after graduation. We feel the students miss the connection between theory and reality; they do not receive any feedback or verification that what they are learning is relevant in real life. It could be argued that in order to obtain control over one's situation and feel motivated to strive on, one must be able to trust that what is learned is applicable to the real working life.

In the *GAP-Model*, Berry et al. (1990) illustrate the difference between the customer's expectations and the management's perception of the customer's expectations, which they also call *gap 1*. We think that the school's perception of the students' expectations is correct. The school is probably aware of the students' wish for more practice in the education. At the same time we do not believe the school has the resources necessary to live up to the students' expectations, which corresponds to *gap 2*. *Gap 2* implies that the school management is the subject of financial restrictions when it comes to which services they can offer. The school does not have the possibility to offer each student individual practice in the working life. Instead the school tries to fulfill the wish of practice the best way they can by inviting guest lecturers and collaborate with the business world. According to Berry et al. (1990), the customer's, in our case the student's, expectations are a result of earlier experience, personal needs and the school's reputation. We feel that the students' expectations are elevated because of the school's good reputation and image, which makes it difficult for the school to answer to those expectations. When the students feel their expectations are not fulfilled it affects their view on quality negatively. Consequently they question if the school's education is as good as they believe it to be.

Something that a lot of the students are displeased with is the fact that one can switch universities during an ongoing education, especially if it means changing from a smaller university to a bigger one. This skepticism originates from stories about students that change from smaller universities the last year of their education and then graduate with a degree from the School of Economics and Commercial Law. The respondents are of the opinion that obtaining a degree from the School of Economics and Commercial Law is more difficult than obtaining a degree from one of the smaller universities in the country. They regard it to be unfair that it is possible to study the first years of the education at an *easier* school and then change to a more renowned school the last year and obtain a degree there as if they had conducted their entire education at that school. We feel that this affects the respondents' view of the school negatively. By that it also affects the third factor mentioned by Grönroos (1990); *the expected quality*. A degree from the School of Economics and Commercial Law is not supposed to be easy to obtain and therefore if there are easier ways to obtain a degree from the school it undermines the education's value.

### ***The Possibility to Influence the Education's Curriculum and Contents***

All of the respondents spontaneously mentioned the course evaluations at the end of each course as their chance to influence the education's curriculum and content. There is also a clear dissatisfaction among the respondents regarding the occasions at which the course evaluations are handed out. They also wish to see some feedback from the results of the course evaluations. The confidence is otherwise generally high towards the school and the teachers. Most of the respondents feel that the school and the teachers have good intentions with the course evaluations. The willingness to engage in course evaluations and quality improvement measures vary from student to student. Some of the respondents do not see the necessity in participating as any changes made would not benefit them. Others do not believe that their ideas and opinions will be taken seriously. We therefore feel that the work with the course evaluations is inadequate as the students do not consider it meaningful to participate.

Other observations have also been made. For example those who study the Bachelor Program in Business and Economics are much more aware about where they can obtain information and engage in different decision preparing groups and course committees than those who take separate courses outside the program.



All of the respondents who study the Bachelor Program in Business and Economics had at some time in their education received information about or been asked if they could imagine engaging in these activities. Many of them also know people who are actively engaged. Many of the respondents who study separate courses outside the program had never heard of these groups, nor did they know where to turn if they should want to get engaged. They feel that their only chance to exert influence on the education is through the course evaluations at the end of each course. The respondents from the program who we believe are not interested in influencing the education are that way because they trust the good reputation of the school and thus believe that the teachers know what is best for them. Those taking separate courses that are not interested in influencing the education are that way because they do not believe their opinions would have any affect. We also feel that the respondents from the program perceive the course evaluations and quality work as more meaningful and that they feel more responsibility towards participating. These are criteria that Hackman and Oldman (1980) call work motivation founded on inner reward. By this we mean that the students from the Bachelor Program in Business and Economics know that they are here to study for at least three years and therefore their incentive to improve the education is greater than of those taking separate courses outside the program. We believe that the students attending the program engage and work more actively to influence the education, even if only by filling in the course evaluations.

Hackman and Oldman (1980) refer to the term “motivation” as something founded on inner and not external reward. They also deal with the subject of how to motivate workers to perform better by altering the work structure. If we consider the course evaluation work we see that there is no external reward to it that would motivate the students to participate. According to the authors, three factors have to be fulfilled to motivate people on the basis of inner reward. The assignment has to be meaningful to the individual. The individual has to feel responsibility for the result of the assignment. And finally he or she must get feedback about the results of their work. In the case of the course evaluations, we think that all of the three factors are missing. We do not feel that the respondents perceive the course evaluation work as meaningful since they do not profit from it themselves or because they think their opinions are not taken in regard. They also do not feel responsibility for the result since they only take a passive part in the evaluation process. This is due to poor feedback regarding the result of the course evaluations. Suggestions are made that the students should be informed about the result from the evaluations after participating via the Internet.

Hackman and Oldman (1980) further mention three underlying psychological conditions that make work feel meaningful. We feel that all but one of these conditions are unfulfilled; the work assignment should consist of and demand a mix of knowledge and skills. In order to fill in a course evaluation it requires in some ways a mix of knowledge and skills; the students must reflect over the evaluation before answering the questions. We do not, however, perceive this factor as significant in this context. We do not believe the respondents perceive the course evaluation work as meaningful just because of the fulfillment of this underlying factor. The second condition is whether the person constitutes a meaningful part of the whole and if he or she is allowed to participate in the task from the beginning until the end. If we look at the course evaluation work we see that the students are not participating from the beginning until the end. Their role in the course evaluation work is very limited. Since many of the respondents do not feel that their opinions are taken in regard they do not perceive their contribution as meaningful. The last factor is the significance of the task to the organization and to others.

The respondents say that they trust that the school and the teachers' have good intentions with the course evaluations so we feel that the respondents consider that the evaluations are important to the school. At the same time we feel that the respondents perceive the significance of the task as something that only benefit the school and not them. It is for this reason we feel that the respondents are participating passively in the course evaluations; they fill them out because they have to, not because it is of any value to them. We do not believe that the task is significant to the people in the organization. In other words we do not feel the course evaluation work is significant to the respondents. Externally, from a long-term perspective we do, however, feel that the course evaluation work is important. There are concerned parties outside the organization that also benefit from the work, for instance employers and the nation as a whole. If the course evaluation work leads to better and higher quality of the education, the employers can expect more from future employees. We also feel that the social and public level of knowledge increases if the education's quality improves, which benefits the nation as a whole.

### ***The Depth of the Education and the Education's Anchor to Real Life***

All respondents feel that the business economics education is a very extensive education, but they also express a wish for a wide knowledge base. From the respondents' answers we concluded that the elementary level, the basic courses, is supposed to be fundamental even if that means being taught *old moth-eaten theories*. For many of the respondents the C-level is the first introduction to the scientific world and with scientific articles. Many agree that as they come further into their education the content tends to be more up-to-date and concerns more current issues.

We therefore feel that depth and applicability to real life are not achieved until the higher levels of the education. We think this has been worked out strategically by the school since knowledge, as the pages in a book, cannot be read all at the same time; they have to read page by page. Hackman and Oldman (1980) deal with something they call *moderators*. These affect the inner motivation and are the following; *knowledge and skills*, *the strength of the need to develop*, and finally *satisfaction with the work environment*. We believe that the school is aware of these moderators and puts them into practice in the curriculum.

When it comes to the education's applicability and the practice in real life, all of the respondents agree that this is an element that is lacking in the education. It is also something they demand and again we believe this wish for practice in real life originates in the fear and insecurity about the future. Many of the respondents have expressed concern for not possessing the knowledge required to enter the labor market once they graduate. We feel that they need the practice in order to verify their knowledge. Hackman and Oldman (1980) mention the importance of obtaining knowledge about the work result as one of the factors contributing to inner work motivation. The students will not see the results of their studies until they have a chance to practice their knowledge in real life. It is important to the students' inner motivation to get verification that what they learn in school today is what is used tomorrow in the labor market.

The respondents also agree that they lack practice in different business and computer systems. However, everybody does not agree on the relevance of learning business systems; some want at least to have tried it while others believe that it does not matter since there are no guarantees that the system in question will be valid or even used in their the future working place.

We interpret the need of practice in the different business and computer systems as very individual, that this need is within the scope of Hackman and Oldman's *moderators*.

We asked the respondents to answer what or which subjects they feel are missing or could be added to the business economics education in order to update it. A common answer is that most of them mention information technology or information retrieval of financial data as something they would like to add to the education. Yet again we interpret this as a question of obtaining knowledge that will be used in the working life in order to be more prepared.

### **9§ University Regulation**

Most of the respondents find the ninth paragraph of the University Regulation to represent the business economics education quite well. However, a few of them find it to be a bit over ambitious and probably meant for those studying at higher levels. They do not consider the law to be of immediate interest until reaching the C-level. We find this to be somewhat of a contradiction since most respondents seem to think that the education gives the "*capability to make independent and critical judgments along with a capability to independently distinguish, formulate and solve problems.*" This is done through efforts such as hand-in assignments, group projects, and so forth, assignments that are also included in the basic levels of the education.

All respondents react to the closing part of the passage; *readiness to face changes in the working life*. They do not seem to fully grasp its meaning and the part is interpreted in many different ways. One of the reasons for this reaction could be that many of the respondents feel uneasy about going out into the labor market.

When moving on to the second passage of the ninth paragraph of the University Regulation, we saw that the respondents interpreted this in many different ways as well. As we see it, the passage touches upon the developed abilities of each individual. It is about "*following the development of knowledge and being able to exchange knowledge with individuals who do not have specialist knowledge within the field.*" Whether these abilities have been developed as a result of the education or not can only be judged by the separate individual.

We did not mention the University Regulation or the ninth paragraph until the end of the interviews; it was the last element. After letting the interviewees read through the ninth paragraph, we saw that it became a part of their *expected quality* for the education. According to Grönroos (1990), the factors resulting in *total perceived quality* are *expected* and *experienced quality*. We assume that the ninth paragraph of the University Regulation becomes a part of the *expected quality* after the respondents have read the passage. Furthermore, Grönroos (1990) mentions that the *experienced quality* is being either consciously or unconsciously compared to the *expected quality*, which is what happened during the interviews. The respondents confront the regulation and judge to what degree the education corresponds to it. In our case the respondents experience that the education does not correspond to some parts in the University Regulation. The parts that the respondents find lacking are the same parts that we believe the respondents are having difficulties to understand, for example "*readiness to face changes in working life and following the development of knowledge.*" The respondents' *total perceived quality*, however, seems to be good since they say the ninth paragraph gives an overall good picture of the business economics education. We find that the newly-created part of the respondents' expectations has somewhat lowered the *total perceived quality*.

We think it is due to the confusing passages that are not quite understood and because of that are judged not to be corresponding to the *experienced quality*. Another possibility is that the expectations that are set up in University Regulation do not correspond to the students' personal expectations.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions and Closing Discussion

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*There is reason to include a closing discussion in our final chapter since our research is based on opinions. It is a question of the students' opinions about the following themes; expectations, future and quality. The respondents shared many opinions, both positive and negative. They likewise gave many similar suggestions on how to improve the situation for the students at the School of Economics and Commercial Law. This made it possible for us to draw conclusions which we illustrate below. Thereafter we will have a discussion about some of the themes we have touched upon in this study.*

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#### 6.1 Conclusions

##### ***The Students' Expectations and Views of the Future***

Students that apply to the School of Economics and Commercial Law do so to obtain a degree they eventually hope will lead to a job. The report from the STUG-project illustrates the same the conclusion. Knubbe and Bengtsson, however, came to the conclusion in their study that it is more important to resemble the recruiter in order to obtain a job. The education is of less significance in the recruiting process' last phases. Our respondents applied specifically to the School of Economics and Commercial Law because of the school's good reputation which they think is an advantage when they will later search for employment. The National Agency for Higher Education says in their report that the school's well-established business department and the school's efforts to attain international status attract ambitious students. Judging from our interviews it is the positive word-of-mouth rather than the actual quality at the school that attracts students. Students apply to the school because of its good reputation, not because of its quality.

Since the students apply to the school with the intention of obtaining a degree that eventually shall lead to a job opportunity, they want as much practice as possible included. To have practical experience is therefore highly valued. The respondents express a wish for a better connection to reality and more collaboration with the business world. The interviewees say they expected more of it than they perceive they are receiving, which affects their quality view negatively.

Because they experience the reality connection as feeble and that knowledge is being practiced too little, they express concern about their future working life. They are not sure what it will mean and how it will actually function in a future working place. Consequently, they are insecure about the required knowledge. The students are also insecure about their own knowledge, which we feel affects their self-esteem. They diminish their own capacities. When one feels insecure about one's knowledge and when one asks oneself whether they are learning the *right* knowledge it results in questioning the whole education; if it is really the *right* one. Judging from the answers, the respondents are satisfied with their choice of school and education even if the insecurity remains.

The respondents believe that if a student finds employment or not after graduating depends mostly on individual ability. It is a question of how much one tries and how good one is at promoting oneself. Even if there are certain concerns about the future, most students see their individual abilities as good. They believe it is difficult to find a job but attainable even if they might not receive the position they wish for.

They also believe their chances of finding a job depend on their fields of concentration; finance, accounting, marketing or management and organization. The study made by Knubbe and Bengtsson showed, however, that the personal qualities are more important in the recruiting process than the education, although the education matters in the first phases of the recruiting process. There seem to be certain differences between the employers' and students' views on the significance of the different fields of concentration. We think this comes from the students' relatively wide knowledge about the contents in the different fields of concentration. This can eventually have an effect on their future quality view if they discover that the fields of concentration are not as important as they thought them to be from the beginning.

### **Quality**

The students believe that the most important factor for a good quality education is competent and good teachers. What they mainly want in good and competent teachers is that they have pedagogical skills but also are knowledgeable in the subject. Judging from our interview material, the respondents do not find the teachers at the School of Economics and Commercial Law as pedagogic as they wish and expect them to be. The STUG-report also confirms this statement. The majority of the respondents believe the teachers often lack the ability to convey knowledge in a good and comprehensible way to the students. None of the respondents doubt, however, the teachers' expertise and their knowledge. This point of view is in opposition to the one given by the STUG-report that says that only 55.5% of their respondents had faith in the teachers' expertise and their knowledge. A reason may be that we chose to do in-depth interviews while the STUG-report is based on a questionnaire. One interpretation can be that the questionnaire illustrates a general discontent among its respondents. The students are generally not content with the teachers at the school, which may be why they gave them bad criticism both regarding their expertise, knowledge and pedagogics in the questionnaire. It is also possible that it is difficult to judge the teachers' expertise and knowledge if the students find their pedagogics bad. Bad pedagogics causes the students to not understand what is being taught. Since the teachers' competence, including their pedagogics, plays a pivotal role in the students' quality view it is important for the school to do something about it in order to maintain its good reputation.

The students are generally content with the curriculum of the education and the examination forms even if they wish to see more practice in the education. They are satisfied with the mix of exams, group assignments and number of presentations of group projects. What they do miss, however, is the feedback from teachers to motivate and verify their knowledge. We believe this would strengthen the students' self-confidences and also contribute to more effective learning as a result of constructive criticisms.

Generally the students think the school offers the resources needed in order to carry out their studies. They are also content with the school's premises and the equipment in the lecture rooms. Most of all they are very satisfied with the library and its personnel. Unlike the report from the National Agency of Higher Education, our respondents do not find the seating-capacity adequate. But they do agree with the National Agency of Higher Education's report about the group rooms and the computer rooms; there are too few in number. The limited accessibility hinders the students' work with the group assignments at school to the extent they wish. The limited accessibility in combination with the relatively large number of group assignments causes dissatisfaction which influences their quality view negatively. The students also miss places in school for social meetings; a relaxing environment where the students just can sit and talk.

We believe this would enhance the sense of community and also the students' identities. As things are at present, many only go to school because of the lectures; instead the social meetings occur outside the school area. If we would have had more time we believe it would be interesting to find out how the students' quality view influences the school's identity. For instance, if a student is discontent with the teachers at school and he or she passes this perception on to others, the good name of the school might become infected.

We were able to see what effect the news of the EQUIS-accreditation had on those who had not heard about it before. Their quality view of the school and the education was enhanced. The EQUIS-accreditation was interpreted as something positive and more or less as an approval of the school's quality, making the students reflect over their own quality view. It was perceived as good that the school works continuously to attain high quality and the EQUIS-accreditation was interpreted as a symbol of that. None of the students felt, however, that they themselves had been affected by the EQUIS-accreditation. They believe their possibilities to influence the education are restrained and they perceive the course evaluations as their only chance to exert influence on the education. However, via the course evaluations they also perceive their possibilities to influence as limited. There seems to be a low level of engagement among the students. If the students do not feel they can influence the quality work they do not feel any responsibility towards it. Instead it becomes easier to criticize the school and point out deficiencies in the quality work. Many of the students do not seem to feel responsible and do not consider themselves as a part of the quality work. The National Agency of Higher Education has also noticed the low engagement. The students are a very central part of the school's work and they play a pivotal role in the quality work. When the students do not feel the school is taking their opinions in regard it has consequences on the experienced quality. The students give many constructive suggestions on how to improve the education but since the students feel there is no natural forum where they can discuss the education we believe these suggestions are not taken advantage of. It could be an important part in the work with the students' quality view.

The ninth paragraph of the University Regulation should give a good picture of the students' education and be a central part of it. The respondents do not, however, regard the ninth paragraph to be relevant before the higher levels in the education, meaning the C-level. The basic levels as A-level and B-level are often referred to as levels where the students only retrieve knowledge in order to pass exams. In connection with the ninth paragraph, many of the respondents mention they would have wanted to familiarize earlier with the scientific research. They mention for instance they would prefer a course in information retrieval and a method course earlier in the education. The respondents were unfamiliar with the phrase in the paragraph about being prepared to meet changes in the working life. We again believe it comes from their worries about their future working life.

## **6.2 Closing Discussion**

When looking at the respondents as a group it stands clear that all have a goal with their studies. Students in general do not attend the School of Economics and Commercial Law just to try it out or without an apparent reason. They are here to obtain a degree which later is to give them a job opportunity. It seems to be a strategic choice to study in Gothenburg as the school's reputation is thought to give the attendees an advantage over business students from other schools in other parts of the country. The value of a degree is something that the respondents can only grasp in their minds. In order to describe this value the respondents use abstract words such as good, fine, valuable, etc. Having said that, it feels relevant to mention the discussion about what function the universities are supposed to fill.

The students at the School of Economics and Commercial Law are primarily interested in obtaining a degree which is relevant for their future careers. This is most likely also the case for their future employers. This desire must be weighed against the broadness of the education and the learning for life. What is preferable over the other is something that we will not discuss as we feel that it lies outside the purpose of our study. The question about who should direct the curriculum, however, still stands. Should it be the *customer* or the *service-supplier*? When the students desire an education that matches the companies' requirements and the school has other goals, it has consequences on how the students perceive the quality of the education. In other words, the school and the students are not working towards the same goal.

But what is quality for the students? It turns out that there are as many different opinions as there are students. Behind this highly psychologically perceived value there is a series of concrete and tangible factors. It is a question of coordinating both the internal and the external resources. The term "resources" refer to both the soft and hard capital that the school has at its disposal such as literature, teachers, administrative personnel, equipment, etc.

All of these factors contribute to the students' perception of the education's quality. Say, for instance, that a printer malfunctions just when printing an assignment that one is in a hurry to hand in. This will affect the students' perception of quality. They will lose confidence in the school's resources and resort to printing at home instead. Even though the incident with the printer may be incidental it affects the students' perception of quality on the whole.

What, according to the students, is especially important in order to maintain a high overall quality is the teachers' competence. Dissatisfaction with the teachers' competence was pointed out by the STUG-project and is also indicated by our interviews. When such a central aspect of quality is lacking it is a very big problem for the school if they want to maintain a good reputation among future students. It is also important to remember that one has to consider the students' high expectations for the School of Economics and Commercial Law. A comparison with other schools and educations within Gothenburg University would not give a fair view of the actual quality as the expectations are much higher in the School of Economics and Commercial Law. A study on actual quality that compared different schools and took into account the students' expectations from the different schools is something that we would find interesting.

As we see it, it is not only the school that has obligations towards the students; the students also have obligations towards their school. Since we are speaking about the quality of a service, we again would like to point out that services are characterized by the fact that both the supplier and the customer, in our case the school and the students, are involved in the production process. It seems, however, that the respondents in general are not interested in participating in quality improvement measures. They seem to want good quality served to them on a silver platter. We see it as somewhat of a contradiction that the respondents desire good quality and at the same time do not want to take the time to take part in quality improvement activities such as student councils and so forth. In accordance with the report from the National Agency of Higher Education we feel as though there is insufficient feedback from the course evaluations. It is unclear if all of the results from the evaluations and quality improvement measures are properly presented to the students. This may be due to lack of commitment from both sides. The poor commitment from the students can perhaps be explained by the large number of students attending the school. In classes of up to 200 students it can be hard to make oneself heard and one might feel anonymous. In such large groups it can be hard to realize the importance of one's own opinion.



We believe that trying to make all parties concerned commit is one of the most important parts of the common struggle for higher quality. Judging from our interview material it is clear that many students do not feel involved in that process. This in turn results in that the students' opinions are even more overlooked and therefore there is no consensus about what quality really is. As long as the term "quality" is seen differently by teachers and students it is hard to achieve the goal of a high quality education. Quality for whom? The responsibility is shared by teachers and students and how to reach a consensus about what quality really means is something that this study will not determine. It does, however, shed some light on what the students expect of their education, their hopes for the future and also their view of what quality is. We hope the study was interesting to read and that it may contribute to a better understanding about the subjects we have dealt with.

We gladly accept any comments or questions regarding the study at this e-mail address:

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# **Appendix 1**

## **Interview Guide**

### **THEME 1: Expectations and Future**

#### **Expectations**

- *Tell us a bit about yourself and your background?*
- *What do you think the elementary university education should yield?*
- *What is the purpose of your studies?*
- *Why do you think students apply to the School of Economics and Commercial Law?*
- *Why did you apply to the School of Economics and Commercial Law?*

#### **Future**

- *What do you think happens to students who graduate from the School of Economics and Commercial Law?*
- *How do you perceive your own chances of finding employment after graduation?*
- *Do you believe you possess the knowledge required for the working life?*
- *What do you think you will work with in the future?*
- *What career opportunities do you see for yourself?*

### **THEME 2: Quality**

#### **Quality**

- *What is quality to you?*
- *What do you consider most important for a high quality education?*
- *Do you feel that you are learning for life at the School of Economics and Commercial Law?*

#### **The Curriculum of the Education**

- *How do you find the curriculum of the education?*
- *Do you think there are any missing or unnecessary elements in the business economics education?*
- *What do you think about the examination forms?*

## **Resources**

- *Do you think the School of Economics and Commercial Law can offer the resources needed for you to pursue your studies?*
- *What do you think of the library, the computer halls, the group rooms, equipment, premises and access to personnel; administrative and teachers?*
- *How do you find the work environment at the school?*
- *What do you think of the information supply?*
- *What do you think of the teacher competence at the school?*

## **Collaborations and Partnerships**

- *Are accreditation, collaborations and partnerships important for you?*
- *Do you believe accreditation, collaborations and partnerships can affect your career and if so how do you think it may affect your career?*

## **Student Influence**

- *What do you think of your possibilities of influencing the education?*
- *Do you know any students with the possibility of influencing their education?*
- *What do you think of the course evaluations?*
- *What do you think happens to the course evaluations?*

## **Real Life**

- *What do you think of the connection between your education and real life?*
- *What is your perception of the contents of the business economics education?*
- *Are there any new fields within the business economics education that you would to see added in the education?*
- *Do you think the business economics education of today has a wide enough spread of fields?*

## **9§ University Regulation**

All interviews ended with the respondents reading the 9§ University Regulation and commenting on it row by row.

## **Appendix 2**

*"9§ The elementary university education shall give the students*

- capability to do independent and critical judgments,*
- capability to independently distinguish, formulate and solve problems, and*
- readiness to face changes in the working life.*

*Within the concerned education's field the students shall, in addition to knowledge and skills, develop capability to*

- search and evaluate knowledge on a scientific level,*
- follow the development of knowledge, and*
- exchange knowledge with individuals who do not have specialist knowledge within the field.*

*The research studies shall, in addition to what counts for the elementary university education, give the knowledge and skills needed to independently be able to pursue research.*

*Law (2001:1263)."*

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***Own translation of the 9§ University Regulation (9§ Högskolelagen, 2001:1263)***

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